

# **WAR AND PEACE IN YORUBALAND**

**1793 - 1893**



***Edited by***  
***Adeagbo Akinjogbin***







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Yorubaland 1793 - 1893**





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*Note: (All titles are as they were in 1986)*



## Preface

This volume contains selections from the papers presented at the centenary conference on the 1886 Kiriji/Ekiti Parapo Peace Treaty which was held at the Obafemi Awolowo University from 21st to 28th September 1986. Some papers have been excluded entirely for one or more academic reasons. Where the issues treated by two or more authors are closely related, their papers have been combined to avoid unnecessary repetition. One or two chapters were commissioned after the conference to fill obvious gaps that would have made the work untidy. All the selected papers from the conference proceedings have been re-written in accordance with the comments at the conference and readers' opinions. While we are aware that not all the issues connected with War and Peace in Yorubaland have been exhaustively discussed in this volume (they cannot in one volume, no matter how fat) we hope that what is contained here gives a coherent picture of different aspects of the human drama that constituted the Yoruba Civil Wars which went on for a century from 1793 to 1893. We hope also that issues raised in this volume will lead to wider vistas of and further inquiries into the Yoruba, nay Nigerian, historical development before, during and after the sad century.

This selection recommends itself. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to give some background to the conception of the conference and the publication of the selection, just in case there are those who still hold the notion that Yorubaland in the 19th century has been overflogged, or to whom the subject, war and peace, offers no attraction. True enough, the 19th century has received the attention of scholars more than any other period in Yoruba history. This has produced the myth that the period has been sufficiently researched. Nevertheless, the literature (the most prominent of which focuses on the wars) has not taken a global, comprehensive look at the causes, course and consequences of the wars. Nor has it considered the changes (peaceful or cataclysmic) which are still with us a hundred years after the peace.

The planning of the conference and the publication of this selection, are therefore anchored to this desire to provide a comprehensive account of the development of Yorubaland in the 19th century. The fascination for war and peace is both deliberate and accidental. It is our contention that wars need not produce only terrible consequences: they also bring forth the best in human ingenuity. Although the wars destroyed three kingdoms (Owu, Egba and Ijaye), the old imperial capital at Oyo-Ile and several flourishing towns all over Yorubaland, they also prompted the foundation of new kingdoms and towns (e.g. Abeokuta, Ibadan and new Oyo). And although the forced migration of people produced indescribable human suffering, it also resulted in greater cultural cohesion of Yorubaland through the integration of the refugees. These and other indicators of socio-political and economical development of Yorubaland in the age of revolutionary wars lead us to believe that the wars have not been without some positive aspects after all. The occasion of the centenary of the peace that ended the wars has, therefore, afforded us the opportunity of re-examining all these issues. Something that has not been attempted since the appearance in 1921 of Samuel Johnson's *History of the Yorubas*.

This book has been divided into four sections. Section A, which covers chapters 1-13, deals with a general view of the wars, their causes and the general populace who

participated in the wars. Section B, chapters 14 to 22, deals more specifically with the war generals and the various military tactics they employed during the wars. Section C, chapters 23–27, looks at external involvement and the search for peace; while Section D, chapters 28 to 43, deals with the consequences of the events of the century, consequences that are still very much with us and are crying for understanding and resolution. The Appendix is devoted to the various addresses read, and resolutions passed at the conference.

As we pointed out earlier, this volume does not pretend to exhaust all the issues and topics involved in the 19th century history of Yorubaland. There are inevitable omissions. For example in Section A, the curious reader may ask for information about such flourishing towns as Ogbomoso, Ejigbo, Owo, Ketu and Sabe, etc. What were they doing during this exciting century? In Section B, very many prominent names are unavoidably left out. Such military leaders and state builders as Basorun Oluyole, Balogun Ibikunle, Basorun Ogunmola in Ibadan, Balogun Ogunsigun in Ijebu, Sodeke in Abeokuta, etc.

Such obvious gaps may also be noticed in Sections C and D. However, we sincerely hope that readers will find the efforts put into this volume worthwhile both on academic and utilitarian grounds.

Such a work as this inevitably gathers a huge burden of gratitude along its path. We will here discharge most but by no means all of them.

Without the support and goodwill of a large number of people the conference could not have been held and this publication could not have seen the light of day. From the typists and student helpers to every member of staff in the Departments of History, Archaeology and Fine Arts, everyone was helpful and we are grateful to them all. We must however mention some personalities and institutions without whose contribution the whole project would have been abandoned at its initial stages. Foremost among these are Dr. E. A. Ifaturoti and Dr. Lawrence Omole through whose instrumentality, the International Breweries in Ilesa, gave us ten thousand naira to start planning the conference. Then Obafemi Awolowo University of Ife gave us six thousand Naira and permission to hold the conference in Ife. Heinemann Educational Books, Ibadan, West African Breweries, Lagos, Ministry of Information, Youth, Sports and Culture, Ibadan, contributed money, material and plenty of goodwill. Then there were individuals largely from Ibadan who contributed to ensure the success of the conference. They include Chief J.A. Ayorinde, then the *Abese* Olubadan, Chief T.A. Akinyele, Chief D.A. Olubode, Chief Kola Daisi, Chief Ayo Labiyi and Chief M.A. Are-Latoosa. Chief I.O. Olagbaju from Ife contributed material.

Some of our royal fathers contributed tremendously. The *Owa-Ooye* of Imesi-Ile, Oba Richard Makanjuola and the late *Owa* of Igbajo, Oba Adelani Famodun, actually participated in the organisation of the conference, attending committee meetings at Ife and Ibadan, organising Local Committees at Imesi-Ile and Igbajo and constantly giving constructive suggestions. To all of them and a host of others whom we cannot mention for lack of space, we are very grateful.

Of the members of the Organising Committee, we must pay special tribute to Dr. Abiodun Adediran whose total commitment to the success of the conference was unbounded. He was indefatigable in ensuring that the minutest detail was attended to and taken care of. Without his immense contribution, the success of the conference

could not have been as total as it was. This is the second attempt at publishing this manuscript. In 1987, Heinemann Educational Books was approached. It demanded thirty thousand naira (N30,000) for one thousand copies. Appeals went out to wealthy Nigerians who we thought should be interested in such a project. However in spite of contributions from such eminent people as Basorun M.K.O Abiola, Lt. Gen. A. Akinrinade (rtd) we could not raise the amount needed. Appeals to governments of Yoruba speaking states and Federal agencies yielded no response. We became discouraged. As in the time of Rev. Johnson one hundred years earlier, the Yoruba appear to show very little interest in their collective history.

The manuscript started gathering dust and would have stayed so but for Emeritus Professor J.F. Ade Ajayi (NNMA) who in 1996 revived our interest in the publication of this work. By then the cost of publishing one thousand copies had risen to one million Naira (N1,000,000.00) and we were required to pay half of the amount. Professor. Ajayi refused to be daunted.

He suggested various ways of finding the money. He further undertook to read the manuscript and proofs at every stage. With this strong support we started anew looking for funds.

In our appeals, we met one very generous Nigerian, Chief Bayo Kuku, the *Ogbeni Oja* of Ijebu Ode. He did not need much convincing. In quiet dignity he issued a cheque for more than half of the amount required for the publication. With that, Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc started. We knew then that we must not fail in getting the book published. But then no other rich Nigerian showed the same kind of interest as the *Ogbeni Oja*.

Then a bright idea came from Chief Tunde Osobi who suggested throwing the book open to small-scale donors. A slightly similar idea had earlier been suggested by Dr. E.A. Ifaturoti. It worked.

Young people who were thirsty for a knowledge of their history as well as older people who, as it were, "have been waiting for the salvation of Israel" started buying the book before it was published. My son-in-law, Mr. Lanrewaju Delano, sold more copies of the book at this stage than anyone else. With the amount collected through this method, we were able to pay Heinemann, the balance of the money demanded.

To all these people mentioned here and dozens of others not mentioned who showed confidence in the work before they saw it, we are immensely grateful. History will continue to thank them all for enabling such an important work to see the light of day.

Finally, I must thank my wife. This is not just for the usual domestic comfort and holding the home front. She deserves thanks for that and for more. At the time when this book was going through the press, circumstances dictated that she read every chapter of the proof to me more than twice for correction. In a real sense, therefore, she is the associate editor of this book. I am really grateful to her.

Above all else we give God the glory that the book has finally seen the light of day.

I.A. Akinjogbin  
Emeritus Professor  
Ibadan  
September 1997



# Keynote Address\*

**Professor I.A. Akinjogbin**

Your Excellencies, *Kabiyesi*, Your Highnesses, the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Distinguished colleagues, illustrious ladies and gentlemen.

I count this a rare honour to stand in front of such royalties, such eminent men and women from all walks of life to give this keynote address in a ceremony to celebrate the centenary of the Peace Treaty signed at the Kiriji War camp on 23 September 1886. The honour is the more enhanced because a centenary celebration is a unique occasion, celebrated only once, and witnessed also only once in anyone's life time. Because of the uniqueness of the occasion, I want to congratulate all of you Excellencies, *Kabiyesi*, honourable men and women, on witnessing this very rare occasion. I rejoice with the University of Ife for being the place where this happy occasion is being commemorated and where a brighter, happier future is being enacted.

There may be people who will ask why we are celebrating this event. They may argue that an event that occurred 100 years ago is past and should be forgotten, while we concentrate our efforts on the many economic and political problems currently confronting the nation. They may indeed suggest that a study of the problems of how to personally stay alive and afloat in these austere times should be of immediate concern deserving all our attention and all our energies. Other people may ask that if we must forget our present problems and cast our minds back a hundred years, why concentrate on only a language group in Nigeria? Will this promote the national unity that we are seeking?

In answering these two questions we cannot do better than re-echo Professor S.O. Biobaku, when 10 year ago, on 26 July 1976, he gave a keynote address to an International Conference on Yoruba History and Civilisation which was held in this University. In relation to the first set of questions, Professor Biobaku said

Unless we have discovered our roots and are rooted in the lores and mores of our people, we are in danger of a false modernisation in which we might gain this world only to lose our souls as Nigerians.

Indeed it has become clear that in the last 25 years, we have failed both to modernise and to gain our souls precisely because we have not paid sufficient attention to our past but have constantly looked outside for solutions to our economic and political problems. Events have shown that other people's solutions are not necessarily efficacious in the treatment of our indigenous problems. A greater awareness of our past and the application of our historically tested solutions to our modern problems may lead us to real progress.

In answering the second question - why concentrate on a language group, the Yoruba, Biobaku again said:

The Yoruba-speaking peoples are identifiable as a people with a common past and to study their history is legitimate. Such a study

highlights what they can contribute to the amalgam of a Nigerian civilisation and in no way derogates from the contributions of other peoples in the Nigerian nation. Indeed, the surprise is that such separate studies of the constituent Nigerian peoples have led to the appreciation of the similarities between the peoples and have often emphasised what unite rather than what divide them.

Apart from that, there are two other senses in which what we are here celebrating is truly national. First, peace cannot be circumscribed or appropriated by only one language group or geographical region. Peace in one part of our nation is therefore peace all over the nation. Second, in the making of the 1886 Peace Treaty, other Nigerian groups were actively involved. The *Emir* of Gwandu, the *Etsu* of Nupe, the *Emir* of Ilorin, and the Colonial Administration in Lagos were all actively involved. This meant the involvement of such other language groups as the Nupe, the Hausa, the Borgawa and the Fulani.

Perhaps we ought to take a brief historical excursion into the events that led to the signing of the 1886 Peace Treaty, in order to show why that historic action marked a turning point in our history.

Throughout the 18th century, Yorubaland was politically and economically stable. In the northern and western parts, Oyo controlled an empire that included other non-Yoruba speaking peoples. Other Yoruba kingdoms in the south and east were stable and reasonably prosperous. They were held together by their common belief that Ile-Ife was their *Orirun* and protected from external aggression by the mighty Oyo army. Then in 1793, for historical reasons that we cannot go into here, political problems started within the metropolitan core of the mighty Oyo Empire. Afonja, the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo*, Commander-in-chief of the Oyo imperial forces, revolted and refused to obey the orders of the monarch. Law and order broke down and the citizens' safety was greatly reduced. Then in 1812, as if that was not bad enough, the centuries-old sacrosanctity of Ife was broken. The ancient kingdom of Owu attacked the kingdom of Ife, the *Orirun Yoruba*, and conquered most of its western towns.

Oyo and Ife lay and still lie in the centre of Yorubaland, both geographically and politically. The stability of Yorubaland therefore largely depended on the events in the area. With such problems in both kingdoms, the rest of Yorubaland consequently became actively involved in the break-down of law and order. The Owu attack of Ife led to a full scale war on the Owu kingdom by a combined force of Ife, Ijebu and Oyo soldiers. The war started about 1821 and by the time it ended about 1825, all the towns in the prosperous kingdom of Owu had been destroyed and their population scattered in all directions. Immediately the Egba towns, neighbours of Owu were attacked both by the vanquished Owu and the victorious allied forces. By 1828, the Egba kingdom, comprising about 30 towns and villages, had also been destroyed and their population scattered in all directions.

About 1817, Afonja, who had been contemplating creating a kingdom for himself with Ilorin as headquarters, invited Alimi, a Fulani scholar, to join forces with him in the hope of strengthening his military capabilities. However Alimi and his descendants had other ideas and in 1824, Afonja was overthrown and the kingdom he had been carving-out for himself taken over by Fulani Muslims. Immediately they declared a Jihad against the rest of Yorubaland.

Around 1826, a year after the capital of Owu was destroyed and two years after the Palani Muslim rulers had taken over Ilorin, the Yoruba rulers woke up, as if from slumber, to behold the dire consequences of what Rev. Samuel Johnson called their "shortsightedness", "acts of treachery" and "selfishness" since 1793. They therefore convened a meeting at Ikoyi, to settle their differences, to resolve to unite and collectively protect the territorial integrity of Yorubaland. However, after over 30 years of terrible internecine wars, more than one single meeting was surely needed to resolve all the differences between those who had been active participants on opposite sides of the wars, no matter the goodwill and the pressure of the realities facing them. It was therefore hardly surprising that the 1826 conference did not achieve the immediate cessation of hostilities among the Yoruba. But from then on, the desire to protect individual lives and freedom and the territorial integrity of Yorubaland was never lost sight of.

Because they could not unite to pursue their laudable objectives, each group sought to achieve them in its own way. Each Yoruba kingdom, guarded its own freedom very jealously and sought alliances from wherever it could to protect it.

In the process, various Yoruba groups came into conflict with one another leading to yet more civil wars, greater misery and alienation from one another.

The only power that clearly saw that peace and territorial integrity would only return to Yorubaland when all of the kingdoms were brought together under one military power and which consistently pursued the objective was Ibadan. In 1840, the Ibadan army conquered the Ilorin army at Osogbo and drove them back to Ofa. Between 1840, and 1870, Ibadan fought successful wars against most of the other Yoruba groups, taking over Ife, Ijesa and Ekiti in the process of defending what it saw as Pan-Yoruba interest. In the process, the Ibadan aroused the hatred of the conquered peoples and the suspicion of those who felt threatened, while the external enemies continued to fan the embers of mistrust among all the Yoruba.

In 1877, the Ibadan launched what they termed "the war to end all wars". The reasoning was that already the Oyo speaking areas, the Ife, the Igbomina, the Ijesa, the Ekiti and the northeastern Yoruba kingdoms were being militarily controlled directly from Ibadan. The only important groups still left were the Egba and the Ijebu. Their positions were the more strategic because they controlled the route to Lagos, the source of the new military weapons. If they could be brought under the military control of Ibadan, then there would be no more wars in Yorubaland. Aare Latosa, the ruler of Ibadan decided on a war with the Egba as a step towards achieving this goal.

Although the Egba and the rest of Yorubaland would have wanted Yoruba unity, they did not want it under Ibadan or anybody's imperialism. So the Ijebu joined the Egba to prevent both of them from being subjected. The Ekiti, seeing that Ibadan's military might would be stretched to the limit in this venture, revolted. So started the 16 years war, the war to end all wars, which did not end until 1893. In this war, practically all sections of Yorubaland were involved, fighting for freedom from oppression. The Ekitiparapo, joined by Ife and Ijebu in 1882, were fighting to be free of Ibadan. The Ibadan and their allies were fighting to prevent Yorubaland from disintegrating and being taken over by the Fulani rulers based in Ilorin.

In spite of the advantages enjoyed by the Ekitiparapo in weapons, the war had reached a stalemate by 1882 and although every one wanted peace, no one succeeded



in arranging one in spite of vigorous efforts made by such people as the *Emir* of Gwandu, and Derin Ologbenla, the *Ooni*-elect of Ife. On the 27 December 1882, the *Lagos Times* wrote a long, passionate and powerful editorial on the war. It detailed the genesis of the war, its progress and the terrible consequences it had caused. It then asked:

"who is not sickened at the above recital... How much longer will it continue?... why should not the native inhabitants of this island (i.e. Lagos) representatives of the different tribes in the interior, interpose their united aid? Is there so little interest in the country and race, so little desire for their preservation, the reconstruction of desolate places and their general prosperity, so little patriotism in the people, so little gratitude to God for the security and peace they here enjoy, so little care for their own business that they cannot afford to lay by their tribal jealousies, rouse themselves and unitedly and perseveringly co-operate to bring about peace?"

The Yoruba elites in Lagos were jolted into arousing themselves and unitedly they requested the aid of the Lagos government to intervene. After four years of perseverance, peace was made between the main combatants on the 23 September 1886. The war indeed ended all wars in Yorubaland in miraculously different way from the original conception.

Wars are terrible things. The recent example of the Nigerian civil war, which lasted only 30 months, is a good example of what terrible woes wars produce. When civil wars last almost 100 years, with only short intervals of peace, the woes, the sufferings and the heartaches are completely unimaginable. Much more permanent danger are the changes that would have been produced in the mental processes of socialisation and societal relationships. For within the 100 years, a whole generation would have developed who would not have known life without wars and whose view of society and of social relationships would be wholly conditioned by the events prevailing in and mores governing wars. Such a generation would then transmit to their descendants those abnormal views of society and social relationships, which can spuriously be represented as normal relationships. The end result would be to perpetuate siege mentality, mutual suspicion and divisiveness.

Today you are likely to see evidence that 100 years after the peace was made, such abnormalities have not been completely wiped out. One of the purposes of this conference is to make a deliberate effort to get beyond and behind the century of wars, see what that 1886 Peace Treaty sought to achieve and thus continue the process of restoring normalcy. If later today, during the session *L'ajo f'oun* you hear the Oyo group singing

*Aso gbo, Sokoto gbo,  
Lawani sonu si 'Bokun,'*

and the Ijesa replying:

*Ogun Oyo kerekan  
Ogun Oyo kerekan  
Imorimo jojo,  
Ogun Oyo kerekan.<sup>2</sup>*

or the Ekiti intoning:-

*To, to, to, ni aro iro  
Okokan ni Oyo iyo  
O si pe k'Oyo ti i Jaye Ode Ibadan*



*Se ni t'Oyo a gbo re re  
A se su u".*

Or such similar songs by various groups, each singing its own praises and disparaging the others, you must understand them in the proper context of the times. They were meant solely and purposely to spur the soldiers to victory in the different battles or to console them and make them persevere if they suffered defeats. To see them in any other light or use them for any other purpose would be taking them out of context and misusing them.

For, as it is commonly known, out of adversities, blessings do come out. One blessing, and there are many more, which arose as a direct consequence of the 100 years of Yoruba civil wars and to which I want to direct our attention, is the mixing and mingling of different sections of Yoruba-speaking peoples and the subsequent harmonisation of Yoruba culture. Ibadan is a successful example of this mixing and mingling. Virtually every town and village in Yorubaland lost at least a son to Ibadan. In other words, the Ibadan today are a thorough mixing and mingling of all Yoruba groups. Indeed, the Nupe, the Hausa, the Bariba were also successfully integrated into Ibadan. And by the end of the 19th century, even the Fulani were seeking to be accepted as full-fledged Ibadan when they sang "*e ma pe wa l'ajoji moo, a jo ni le yi ni*".

What happened in Ibadan also occurred in all the other Yoruba kingdoms in varying degrees. The Owu and the Egba are to be found fully integrated everywhere in Yorubaland; the Oyo are plentiful in Ekiti, just as the Ekiti are plentiful in Ijesa, Ijebu, Ondo and Ife, where all of them are now claiming to be indigenes of their present abode. The Ekiti, Ijesa or Ife who now makes fun of or feigns to distrust an Oyo may be no more than a grandson of Oyo refugee in Ekiti, Ijesa or Ife. An Ibadan who abuses an Ijebu and refuses to give his daughter in marriage to an Ijebu may be no more than a descendant of Ijebu settler in Ibadan. In whatever direction you look, we are all now thoroughly mixed and the sub-ethnic groups are very unreal and only skin deep. At best, they should be treated as no more than convenient administrative boundaries.

Today, we are celebrating the peace made among the Yoruba people 100 years ago, a peace which ended all hostilities and which was meant to bring back the pre-civil war relationships. I want to emphasise that we are not fighting the wars all over again. If there are any here who still feel they have come to start the wars all over again after a century of peace, they are advised to turn their weapons into agricultural implements and get ready to feed the nation.

For the rest of this week, events will be going on in different parts of Yorubaland to pay a deserved honour to our ancestors. Tomorrow, Tuesday, 23 September 1986 when it will be exactly 100 years of the signing of the Peace Treaty, we will be paying homage to our heroes by making a pilgrimage to the site where the Peace Treaty was signed and where we hope to raise a Peace Memorial that our children's children can continue to appreciate 100 years from now. From Wednesday onwards until the end of the week, academics will be pondering over various facets of the war and peace in learned papers with a view to understanding our past, so that we can appreciate the present and chart the future. On Friday 26th and Sunday 28th September, prayers will be said in the Mosques and Churches for continued peace in Yorubaland and Nigeria.

While we are celebrating the peace which our ancestors bequeathed to us 100 years ago and which has endured, perhaps we should address our minds to what we intend

to bequeath to the generation that will be celebrating the bicentenary of this same event a 100 years from now. Will they still be celebrating only the peace, or shall we of this generation give them other things more, such as unity which together with peace can lead to progress and stability all over our nation Nigeria?

I like to end this address with quotations from a Yoruba poem I wrote in 1962 titled *Rogbodiyan* published in *Ewi Iwoyi* (1962)

*"Bi a ba jo ngbe, e je afi ara da ara wa,  
Ko si aremaja, ko si ajamaree  
Oju-ni-kaluku-wa nro 'un ni ewe alasuwalu  
Fi nsu gbogbo wa jo ni t'ebi t'ore  
Bi a ba wa gbagbe oro ibere, ti a gbagbe 'un ajoso  
Awon eniti ko gbon, awon eniti ko moran  
Nwon le gbe'hin ogba, ki won o yo wa ni 'su lo.*

*Aiye ode oni d'aiye omowe  
Bi a ba wa ka'we oun, ti a gboye beere  
Ti a ba gbagbe itan, ti a gbagbe ohun ajoda  
Ti a tun mba ara wa s'ogun atiiri,  
Ti a ko le mu suuru, ki a fi ara da ara eni  
Ti a ba ja, ti a ni ko ni tan tirantiran,  
Ti a tun npe alarooo wa ba wa fo eni wa,  
K'a ranti, bi o ba fo tan, a maa pe o to se ise.  
Ko ni fo ni igba ti enyin baba wa yi o.  
Koo ni baje nigba tiwa naa o  
Ewe alasuwalu yio maa su wa jo ni tebi tore.*

[Commotion]

When in a community we live together  
Let us tolerate one another,  
Chummy friends sometimes fight,  
Erstwhile foes do reconcile  
It's only through forbearance  
Can we in peace and prosperity  
Cohere as happy kiths and kins  
If this basic concept we forget,  
And treat as nought the first principle of love,  
The apparently unwise and the ignorant  
May come from the back,  
And remove our yams from the stack.

Nowadays, western education is the vogue  
If after our education  
And a string of degrees to show,  
We forget our history and common culture,  
Become cantankerous with one another,  
Intolerant of and impatient with one another  
Quarrelling and refusing to settle,  
But seek external allies for mutual destruction,  
Remember it is easier broken than mended.  
You our fathers here present, may things not go wrong in your time, nor in ours either.  
Thank you

\* Being the Keynote Address delivered at the opening session of the Centenary Conference on the Kiriji Peace Treaty held at Oduduwa Hall, University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife) on 22 September 1986.

**SECTION A**

**War and Peace in Yorubaland**

## **Chapter One**

# **19th Century Wars and Yoruba Ethnicity\***

**J.F. Ade Ajayi**

## **Introduction**

The importance of historical consciousness for mobilisation and nation building in Africa is widely recognised among scholars, if not adequately so among political leaders when funding teaching and research. But even among scholars, there are blind spots. The interest of historians has been concentrated on nationalism and political mobilisation first, at the Pan-African and then at the National levels. They recognise that nationalism among heterogeneous people has to be fostered, but they regard nationalism within the composite groups of a nation state as ethnic particularism or tribalism which is to be discouraged because it hinders the growth of loyalty to the overall nation state.

Sociologists and political scientists confronting the problem of ethnicity have drawn attention to the role of group memories and perceptions of the past among component groups as factors of contemporary politics in African States.

The reluctance of historians to get involved with contemporary history has meant that the issue of ethnicity is not often explored fully in its historical context. This is a pity because even social anthropologists have now realised that ethnicity is not a static but a dynamic phenomenon, changing interests of leaders in changing historical situations. The Yoruba may be typical of every language group in Africa, but a survey of what is known of historical consciousness among them throughout their history may throw some useful light on ethnicity and the problems of identity in Africa.

## **Pre-19th Century Background**

The Yoruba who today number an estimated 20 million people, occupy the Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Ogun, Lagos and part of Kwara and Kogi States in Nigeria, as well as part of the Republic of Benin and Togo. The Igala and Itsekiri speak languages closely related to Yoruba. Yoruba diaspora are also to be found in Brazil, Cuba, Trinidad and other places in the Caribbean. A cave at Iwo Eleru near Akure has yielded a skeleton with a radio carbon date of about 9,000 B.C. Linguistic evidence suggests that the Yoruba language has been spoken continuously within the area for upwards of 4,000 years.

We know nothing of the history of these early times, or specifically how the Yoruba language spread over such a wide area: was it that a single stock of people who spoke proto-Yoruba peopled the whole area? It seems unlikely that the evolution of the Yoruba language and its regional variations or dialects evolved from a group of speakers of proto-Yoruba numerous enough to impose their language over several other groups speaking different languages. It seems more likely to imagine that the group of Yoruba speakers evolved over several centuries from a single centre and as



they moved further away in time and space, there emerged dialectal variations in the form of the language they spoke. Archaeologists and linguists suggest that the movement was probably from around the Niger/Benue confluence westwards. Such early speakers of Yoruba in seeking preferred sites of habitation in river valleys, the more open grasslands, hilltops and fringes of forests must have lived in relative isolation until population increase drove them to occupy more and more space. Religious practices, culinary habits and other aspects of culture must have varied widely. Yet differences in the ecology leading to some specialisation in production must also have encouraged some communication and perhaps even commercial exchange. The initial migrations and peopling of the Yoruba areas must have been part of the historical consciousness of the people at the time. However, since political organisation was most likely still fragmented, based largely on kinship groups and the management of abundant agricultural land, there probably was little time left to the historical consciousness.

Oral traditions of the Yoruba people reach back only to a later period associated with Ife-Ife and the myths of Oduduwa, with only hazy ideas of the pre-Ife period. Ife clearly represents an advanced stage in the homogenization of Yoruba culture. The centralised monarchical state with an elaborate court ritual and hierarchy of chiefs and officials became the preferred pattern of political organisation. So also was the urban centre to host the court, the market and the principal shrines, and act as capital to the surrounding agricultural villages. The nucleated village surrounded by farms shared among the kinship groups became the normal pattern of spatial arrangement. The village was governed by a centralised system, monarchical in concept, but with much reduced court rituals. There were significant variations in the details of the political arrangements. So also in the details of the local deities that received special veneration. But in the growing homogenisation, a number of common deities emerged which were gradually incorporated into a pantheon of "401" gods. The religion became systematised and encapsulated in a body of formal divination chants or scriptures that became part of the common Yoruba heritage.

It is a moot question how this degree of homogenisation emerged: was there an Ife Kingdom that exercised control over the core of Yorubaland, with branches of the Ife ruling dynasty establishing subordinate dynasties in other Yoruba kingdoms, or was Ife never a major military power and its homogenising culture spread only through the influence of ideas? Through direct political control or just influence, Ife exercised such a cultural hegemony from the 12th to the 16th centuries that it became the basis of a Pan-Yoruba historical consciousness. Not only did the monarchical system come to be preferred to a decentralised system, in the competition among various villages or towns for hegemony in an area, the emergent ruler had to seek validation by tracing descent from Ife, and to show this by the use of various items of ritual or regalia borrowed from Ife. The process of organising disparate beliefs and traditions into this coherent system was also the making of a common historical consciousness among the Yoruba people. The strength of these traditions and depth of their influence on the Yoruba people can be seen in the way the traditions have survived even after Ife had lost whatever military power that it ever had.

It is not clear when or how this Ife cultural hegemony declined. Various kingdoms arose close to Ife, hedging it in and leaving it with very little land. Perhaps the myth

tracing the origin of Oduduwa to migrants from the Middle East escaping with traditional religion from fanatical Muslims in the 7th century A.D. might have been in the period of Ife decline as a possible weapon to shore up its reputation. At all events, by the 16th century, a number of distinct sub-cultural groups were identifiable in the Yoruba area, based on regional variations of the common language, differences in political and social arrangements, details of land tenure and local emphasis on particular deities from the common pantheon. The principal ones were the Ife, Ijesa, Ekiti, Ebira, Owo, Akoko, Ondo, Ilaje, Ijebu, Egbadò, Awori, Egba, Owu and Oyo. On the eastern and western fringes and around the coastal lagoons there were other related groups. Only among the Ife and Oyo did a single monarchy succeed in incorporating all the polities into a single political system. While Ife was hedged in, Oyo was able to expand into a major kingdom and later even a mighty empire. Among other sub-cultural groups, a number of autonomous kingdoms continued to co-exist though one or the other might have been trying with varying success to establish a dominant position. In a few, there was a plurality of kingdoms, particularly in Ekiti where there were said to have been 16 or more crowned *obas*. These different groups, aware of the traditions of common origin of the rulers at Ife, and a common mutually intelligible language, must have shared the same consciousness of history. But they seemed to have no common name for themselves. Freed slaves in the 19th century identified themselves usually as Ijesa, Ekiti, Ijebu or Egba. Others even identified themselves, not by the name of the sub-cultural groups, but of particular kingdoms or towns within the groups such as Efon in Ekiti. In European and Latin American sources, they were referred to usually as Olukumi (that is, my friends) and their language as *Anago*.

There is no doubt that in the 17th and 18th centuries, Old Oyo was the dominant political power. Its power derived from its location near the Niger in the more open grasslands. It became a major centre for exchanging goods from the forest areas and the coast – from Benin, Ife, Ijebu, Dahomey and other places – with those from the grassland areas of Hausaland and Borno and of the trans-Saharan routes stretching on to the Mediterranean Sea and Europe. The basis of the power of Old Oyo was the cavalry force round which a group of semi-professional warriors emerged. With the cavalry the Oyo kingdom grew at the expense of the Nupe and Borgu States, and established its control down to the coast and westwards into Dahomey. The cavalry was not very effective in the forested areas of central and eastern Yorubaland. With its close links with Nupe and the Bariba of Borgu, Oyo evolved a distinctive sub-culture and introduced many artifacts and innovative ideas into the general Yoruba culture – such as the care of horses, the men's weaving loom, the slinged talking drums, masquerades in textile clothing only, etc. Until its collapse in the early 19th century, the dominance of this powerful Oyo empire with commercial links not only with the North but also with Benin and the European traders on the coast, provided the basis of some stability that shielded the Yoruba as a whole from the worst effects of the slave trade. Yet, powerful as it was, it did not replace Ife in the traditions or the historical consciousness of the Yoruba people.

### The 19th Century Wars

The collapse of Old Oyo partly from internal decay and partly from pressure from the southern extension of the Fulani Jihad at Ilorin at the beginning of the 19th century

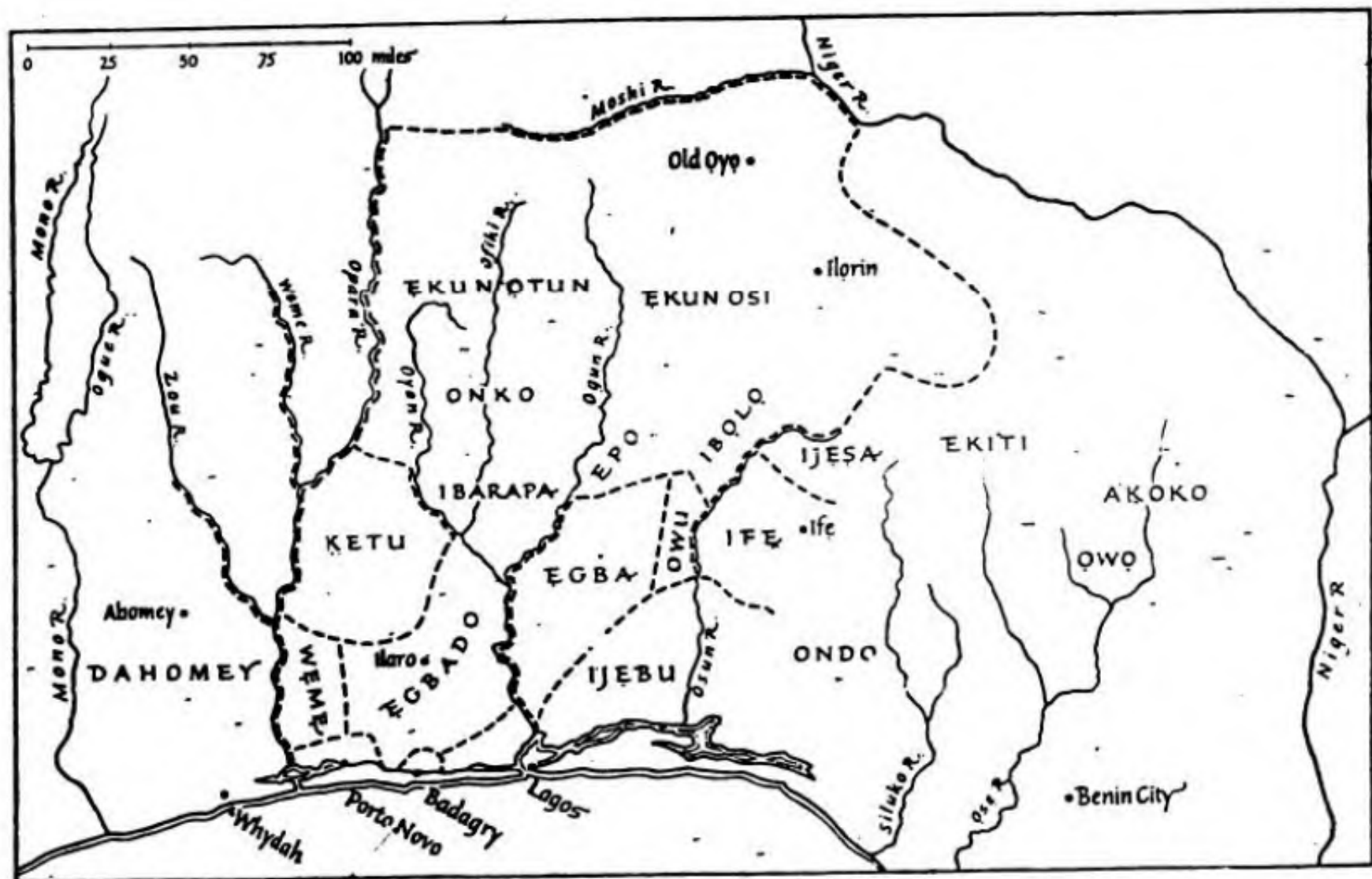


Fig.1.1: Map of Yorubaland in the 19th Century



unleashed a period of intra-Yoruba wars that did not end till the British intervened to make peace and install themselves as rulers at the end of the century. All the towns and villages, including the capital, at the heartland of the Old Oyo kingdom were either destroyed or abandoned.

The area is now a Forest Reserve. There was mass migration of Oyo people southwards, a few trekking as individual families or groups of friends seeking opportunities as settlers under existing regimes asking just to be allowed to farm or trade. Others, led by bands of armed warriors sought to create their opportunities by force: to destroy existing states and establish new polities on their land. Some settled in Southern Oyo swelling the population and spilling over to push the Owu and the Egba people further southwards at the expense of the Egbado. There was considerable mixing of peoples – Oyo migrants going as farmers and traders to settle in Ife, Ijesa and Ekiti areas; new areas on the lagoon hitherto regarded as too swampy began to be opened up for trade and farming.

These demographic changes led to new revolutionary consequences. The monarchical principle continued to be observed in theory; in practice it was the age of warrior entrepreneurs who learnt the art of war, built up a reputation and a followership, amassed slaves who were used to farm and produce palm oil for export to the coast in return for firearms. Oyo warriors abandoned the cavalry force and, using the Eso tradition of semi-professional group of warriors, took to firearms and evolved new military strategies. Such warriors established new power bases or continually challenged existing monarchies for the exercise of power. The Egba and large sections of the Owu regrouped at Abeokuta and experimented with new constitutional arrangements. They welcomed missionaries hoping to use their influence to build up commercial and military power outshining their closest rivals, the Ijebu. The Oyo warriors at Ibadan were the most successful. They defeated the Ijaye, the only Oyo power to rival them. They gave scant recognition to the *Alaafin*, the monarch now settled at a new Oyo some 30 miles north of Ibadan, and built up a republican system of hierarchical chieftaincies to which individuals were promoted on the basis of merit, especially merit gained in war. This attracted a few notable non-Oyo warriors, but the Oyo managed to keep a firm control and built up an empire that controlled much of southern Oyo, Ife, Ijesa, Ekiti and part of Akoko where they began to compete with Benin, Nupe and Ilorin for hegemony. Eventually, the different areas built up a grand alliance based on Ijesa and Ekiti warriors (the Ekitiparapo), controlling a route in eastern Yoruba land to the lagoon and Lagos for the supply of breech-loading rifles. The Ife, Ijebu and Egba joined the alliance against Ibadan and Ilorin. This was the long drawn out war that reached a stalemate and led to the invitation to the British to intervene and impose a Peace Treaty to resolve the several issues that had emerged throughout Yorubaland in the course of the many years of warfare.

The wars coincided with the European effort to end the slave trade. Large numbers of slaves, not merely individuals but sometimes all able-bodied members of a whole village found themselves in Cuba and Brazil. Others were rescued and landed in Freetown. Soon these freed slaves were leading missionaries back to Abeokuta, Lagos and other places. Later still, Brazilians and West Indian Yoruba were arriving back to play their role in Yoruba's century of Revolution. Similarly, Islam was also spreading beyond Ilorin to Oyo and Ijebu areas, and from Nupe into Akoko. The agents of these external factors tended to view the Yoruba as a single target area for their expansionist ambitions.



### The Search for Peace

In the search for security in the face of the mass migrations, intense competition for land and the control of trade routes, each political entity, new and old, tried as best as it could to survive. In the heat of battle, alliances took no notice of cultural homogeneity or common historical consciousness. The Oyo fought other Oyo for a foothold, and in the end, Ibadan destroyed Ijaye. Some Egba joined Ibadan and Ife in destroying Egba towns. The Ibadan built their empire over the Ife, Ijesa, Ekiti and Akoko not only through Oyo settlers, but also with allies among dominated peoples themselves. Ultimately however, each came to realise that while the world of the Yoruba would never be the same again and various adaptations and innovations had to be made, peace had to be sought through the co-existence of the different sub-cultural groups.

The Yoruba were aware of their cultural homogeneity and many far sighted people tried to use this to seek a basis for peace. For example in 1854, when the rivalry between Ibadan and Ijaye was coming to a head, the Ibadan with the blessings of the *Alaafin* tried to arrange a Pan-Yoruba peace meeting. There was always an undertone of a Pan-Yoruba policy in Ibadan which favoured opening its political system to people of talent from all parts of Yorubaland. It was only in that way that it could justify itself as a new political phenomenon, independent of the traditional reins of the *Alaafin*. However, the dominant voice was always that of ambitious leaders who saw themselves building up an Ibadan empire which, in scant allegiance to the *Alaafin*, and in alliance with other Yoruba people who managed to escape subjugation, would at last bring peace to Yorubaland. In the end, they failed.

In the stalemate that emerged at the war front in the 1880s, the *Alaafin* offered to mediate between the Ibadan and the Ekitiparapo but neither side trusted him. The Ibadan knew that he secretly wanted Ibadan to be curbed so as not to be a threat to Oyo any longer, while the Ekitiparapo regarded Ibadan as pursuing Oyo interest, and ultimately had the support of all the Oyo. The lack of any armed force of his own left the *Alaafin* with only the power of secret and tortuous diplomacy to salvage something of his ambition to restore the *Alaafin* to a dominant position throughout Oyo's areas of influence.

The *Ooni* of Ife was even in a worse situation. The Ife had welcomed Oyo migrants as a source of cheap labour; but soon Ibadan began to use the Oyo settlers to intervene in Ife politics. In 1847, the *Ooni* in trouble with his chiefs, and relying on the Oyo settlers for support, granted their request for a township of their own outside Ife. The new settlement named Modakeke was later used by the Ibadan twice to sack Ife. The second time was in 1882 when Aderin the *Ooni* elect had to take refuge at Okeigbo. Even in his straited circumstances, relying on the great prestige of his office and his control of the strategic trade route to the south, he tried to make peace. He worked out agreeable terms, but peace floundered on the rock of which side was to break up camp first.

The Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) agents were also seeking to make peace. They decided that it would require the intervention of an outside and superior power who would work out the basis for a comprehensive peace and who would also be willing to impose it, if need be, by force. While some of the agents thought of approaching European missionaries in Lagos to get the British to intervene, others, notably Samuel Johnson, thought it best to approach the *Alaafin* who would, as "king

of the Yorubas", get the British to intervene. This move by Samuel Johnson was part of a carefully laid and deliberate plan to rebuild the Yoruba nation. The C.M.S had been evolving a written form of the Yoruba language based on the Oyo dialect spoken by their first African missionary, Samuel Crowther. The Oyo were sometimes called Yooba (Yoruba), and this term which the C.M.S. adopted for the written language began to be used also for all the people who spoke the language. Against the background of nationalism in Europe, Samuel Johnson was painstakingly gathering a corpus of Yoruba traditions as viewed by the best authorities he could find in Ibadan and Oyo. The views were biased against the Ife, Ijesa and peoples of Eastern Yorubaland, but they were informed by a sincere love for the Yoruba nation as a whole and an ardent desire to see a revival of the fortunes of the Yoruba under a united leadership of the *Alaafin*. He was clear in his mind that the period of Ife cultural hegemony was long past and that the practical possibility for Yoruba revival was to use the military might of Ibadan, laid in homage at the service of the *Alaafin* as king of the Yoruba in the wider sense that the C.M.S. were now using the word. He watched in shame the educated and mostly christianised Yoruba in Lagos, hopelessly divided into the Egba, Ijebu, Oyo/Ibadan and Ekitiparapo groups, and selfishly pursuing their individual, largely commercial interests, without caring for the future of Yorubaland as a whole.

It is not clear whether Johnson ever realised that the united Yorubaland under a single monarchical system that he dreamt about was a creation of his own imagination. There may have been a "Yoruba" kingdom under Ife, but there had been none under Oyo. Nevertheless, his search for peace eventually materialised. The British sent Commissioners to visit the various armed groups at their respective camps, met representatives at a peace meeting and drew up comprehensive peace proposals in 1882. Eventually in 1882, when it suited imperial policy, the local British agents were authorised to set up a body of locally recruited Hausa constabulary under British officers to monitor the simultaneous withdrawal from and destruction of the war camps in 1886. The Ekitiparapo gained their independence and the Ibadan empire was cut down to size; the *Ooni* was restored; the decision that Modakeke be abandoned and the Oyo withdraw to other towns west of Oshun proved too difficult to implement, and this prolonged the state of war until 1893, by which time the British came, no longer as peace-makers, but as rulers.

## The Colonial Period

At the end of the wars and at the beginning of the colonial period, each group went back home to rebuild its fortunes under the changed circumstances of colonialism. The old traditions based on the period of Ife hegemony survived the century of wars and revolution. However, for many Yoruba, the migrations and wars of the 19th century, foundation of new cities and centres of power were the key historical events around which traditions emerged, supplementing, in some cases overlaying or even replacing earlier traditions. The British in their policies discouraged the tradition of warrior entrepreneurs and favoured the restoration and invigoration of the monarchical systems. For this reason some of the British favoured recognition of the *Alaafin* as portrayed by Johnson, king of the Yoruba. Others recognised the vigour of the Ife traditions and recognised the *Ooni* as the spiritual head. But these were academic

exercises. The reality was the series of Native Authorities at the local level, and the main political issues were the location of the headquarters of each local government, the boundaries, and jurisdiction of the Native Courts and Native Authorities, relative to the balance of power as it evolved in the 19th century. Thus the *Alaafin* was built up into a powerful monarch that negated the developments of the 19th century, and Ibadan had to struggle to achieve its autonomy. Ibadan once again came to overshadow Oyo and later adopted the monarchical system, though preserving much of the 19th century structure of achieving office by promotion through the ranks. The Ijesa wanted to use the Ekitiparapo (alliance) to become headquarters of Ekiti, but Ekiti resisted and were constituted into a separate Native Authority, keeping up something of the spirit of the alliance through meetings of the Ekiti Obas, without the disturbing presence of the 19th century warriors.

Samuel Johnson's *History of the Yoruba* which was not published until 1921 became very influential as a basic source of Yoruba history and traditions. Simplified versions were included in school readers. Authorities approached for information about traditions quoted versions of Johnson to the unwary. Johnson provoked other histories to confirm, supplement, or amend the master version, especially among non-Oyo who feared that the biased views of Johnson might mislead the British rulers. Such were Ajisafe's works on the Egba (1924, 1931); Abiola and others on the Ijesa, (1932); Atolagbe on Otun and Moba, etc. These written responses did not contradict the basic plan of Johnson for Yoruba unity; they only disagreed that such unity could come from vesting the headship on the *Alaafin*. However, the written traditions did not much affect the oral traditions which continued to highlight traditions of the 19th century wars.

Thus, in spite of Samuel Johnson, the colonial period did little to expand the historical consciousness of the average Yoruba person to cover more than his own polity or sub-cultural group and embrace all Yorubaland. Instead, the rivalries within the Native Authorities as each polity sought to exploit the ignorance of the British rulers to increase the areas under its jurisdiction, the teaching of local history in the schools, and the effort of the educated elite in the major urban centres to organise local Improvement Unions to mobilise people at the local level for development, all helped to preserve memories of the 19th century wars as active factors in 20th century politics.

## Decolonisation

The nationalist movement in Nigeria was set in motion by Yoruba professionals in Lagos who campaigned on a Pan-Nigerian basis for gentle reforms to grant concessions to educated middle-class Nigerians like themselves to gain access to civil service jobs and appointments to various advisory bodies of government. American trained Nnamdi Azikiwe, the emergent Igbo leader, came to give a new touch of fervour and a Pan-Africanist flavour to the movement. Awolowo, who also came to challenge the hitherto gentlemanly pace of Lagos politicians and make a bid for leadership, began from the grassroots. A former trade unionist and transporter, he campaigned for the reform of local government and for improved educational facilities. As the Yoruba were incorporated into one of three regions of Nigeria, his policy was to rally the Yoruba and thus to dominate that region, and then seek cooperation with nationalists from other regions to run the central government. He resented the divisive influence of Dr. Azikiwe in many parts of Yorubaland, especially Lagos, and he raised the spectre



of Igbo domination. Thus he founded the Egbe Omo Oduduwa (Association of the Children of Oduduwa), established Yoruba newspapers, and planned a University of Ife. The Association was an influential cultural organisation. The political party which he founded later was called the Action Group which had not only to rally the Yoruba but also make friends in the non-Yoruba parts of the Western Region and seek allies in the other regions.

The Egbe Omo Oduduwa was meant to revive the Samuel Johnson view of Yoruba unity and channel it for political purposes. Awolowo being from Ijebu Remo did not have the vantage point of the Oyo or the Ife from which to seek to rally the Yoruba. He wooed the *Ooni*, making him the first Nigerian Governor of the Western Region and locating a University at Ife. By such moves also, he lost the support of the *Alaafin* and important areas of Oyo, especially when he quarrelled with his deputy from Ogbomoso. In short, the fear of Igbo domination and the appeal to the historical consciousness of the Yoruba helped in rallying the Yoruba. Awolowo has remained the dominant Yoruba politician and was formally declared in 1966 as "Leader of the Yoruba" on his release from jail. Yet, the historical consciousness of the events of the 19th century has remained powerful enough to make Yoruba unity a problem in Nigerian politics.

### Since Independence

The theory of the Nigerian independence constitution was that the new Nigerian nation was to supercede the old pre-colonial polities. The colonial regime had relied heavily on the monarchs wielding power in the various Native Authorities. The new constitution gave power to politicians who could campaign throughout the country and not be bound by ties to any traditional domains. There was to be a parliament elected by secret ballot, controlling a cabinet along the lines of British parliamentary democracy. In practice, the politicians knew that they could not do without the support of powerful traditional rulers and elders in the different constituencies. During elections, most communities tended to act together and negotiate terms on a communal basis from the competing political parties and the traditional rulers in most places have remained influential in such negotiations.

There were three regions, with three political parties, each based on the majority 'ethnic' group in each region: the Hausa/Fulani in the Northern People's Congress (N.P.C.) in the North; the Igbo in the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (N.C.N.C.) in the East; and the Yoruba in the Action Group (A.G.) in the West. The hope of political stability in Nigeria was based on a possible alliance or reconciliation of the conflicting interests of these three majority ethnic groups under a Federal Constitution, with the minority ethnic groups surviving as best they could within that equation.

The NPC tried to rally the North on the basis of the 19th century unification of much of the North under the Sokoto Caliphate which dominated the historical consciousness of the immediate pre-colonial period. The NCNC had no such major event but it had the group memory of major conflicts of the 19th century to compete against. The common language and culture, the common interests of securing an advantageous position within the Nigerian scheme of things were powerful enough forces to foster Igbo nationalism.

It has been a cardinal fact of Nigerian politics that the Yoruba could not muster the



same degree of cohesion as the Igbo and the Hausa/Fulani largely because of the historical consciousness of the events of the 19th century. It was a split among the Yoruba of the A.G. that began the crisis that led to the downfall of the First Republic. The conflicts generated by the crisis made unity difficult even when the non-Yoruba part of the Western Region was created into the Midwestern Region and the Yoruba (minus Lagos and those in Kwara) were brought under a single government from 1963 to 1976 when they were again split into three States – Oyo, Ogun and Ondo. Yoruba unity reached a peak in the tense atmosphere of the eve of the civil war when Awolowo was formally designated Leader by a meeting of "Yoruba Leaders of Thought" in 1966. But this unity had never been strong enough to withstand effective pressure from other Nigerian peoples. The discord among the Yoruba has tended to encourage the leaders of the North and leaders of the East either to form the government in alliance, with the Yoruba in opposition; and when they compete, to try to split the Yoruba in search of sub-servient supporters. For this reason, whenever people of other states get frustrated in Nigerian politics, they strike out at others; the Hausa against Igbo and Yoruba, the Igbo against Hausa and Yoruba. However, whenever the Yoruba get frustrated, they turn their attention inwards – as witnessed in Oyo and Ondo during the 1983 elections – and seem to continue to fight the 19th century wars.

### Conclusion

In spite of the usual charge that ethnicity and tribalism are completely negative forces, the trend in Nigerian politics has shown that historical consciousness promoting ethnic solidarity can, and is in fact expected to make a contribution to mobilisation for development, nation building and political stability. Historical consciousness has been useful in mobilising people at the local level, but the fact that the Yoruba have not succeeded in building themselves into a coherent whole has constituted a weakness not only for the Yoruba but also for the Nigerian body politic. The Yoruba sometimes claim that this disunity is a result of their high level of educational development, their social sophistication and naturally liberal disposition. It may, in fact, have been due to the arrested growth of developments of the 19th century, the uncompleted revolution, with British intervention coming at a point of stalemate and thus perpetuating the divisions.

Historical consciousness is a powerful force of integration and at some point in the past it must have been an important fact that fostered Ife hegemony which still survives as a possible rallying point. However, overlaying this tradition of Pan-Yoruba solidarity are the more immediate memories of 19th century divisions and more recent re-enactments of those divisions. Historical consciousness of the Yoruba, being more oral than written, has reinforced the solidarity of the particular polities that had governmental organisations to foster that consciousness. The Yoruba educated elites who are in a position to foster Yoruba unity through the written tradition have, most of the time preferred to reinforce oral traditions of 19th century divisions. Thus, in spite of the remote traditions of solidarity and the common interests the Yoruba share in contemporary Nigerian politics, a united Yoruba nation has not emerged, probably because the Yoruba have not constituted a single historical entity, at least since the 16th century.

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\* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1986 Colloquium of the African Studies Institute of the University of Bayreuth on "Identity in Africa" with the title "Historical Consciousness and Nation Building in Africa: the Yoruba example".

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## **Chapter Two**

# **19th Century Yoruba Warfare: The Geographer's Viewpoint**

**Olusegun Ekanade and Oluwole Aloba**

### **Introduction**

The number of scholars who have produced substantial works on the 19th century warfare in Yorubaland is quite impressive.<sup>1</sup> Akinjogbin in particular has written on the prelude to the Yoruba civil wars of the 19th century as well as on a chronology of Yoruba history between 1789 and 1840.<sup>2</sup> Although these works and numerous others reported on the pages of missionary journals and personal diaries<sup>3</sup> throw light on some of the events which took place before, during and after the 19th century general upheaval in Yorubaland, they are, however, silent on the geographical aspects of the warfare. At best what one can gather from some of them are partial references to geographical phenomena like settlements and migrations of people from one ecological zone to another. The aim of this chapter is therefore to examine the spatial dimensions of the 19th century warfare in Yorubaland. To this end, the chapter has been divided into seven parts with this introduction as Section one.

In Section Two, a brief conceptual framework is developed. Sections Three and Four examine the extent of the physical environment and ethnic states in Yorubaland respectively. The relationships between the environment and settlements in Yorubaland as well as the spatial consequences of the Yoruba warfare are discussed in Sections Five and Six respectively. Section Seven is the conclusion.

### **The Conceptual Framework**

The social scientist's ability to model or conceptualise real life situations enhances the chances of having a better understanding of the forces at play and the spatial consequences of such forces on the geographic space.<sup>4</sup> There is hardly any aspect of geography which cannot be conceptualised or modelled. However, in the "geography of warfare" (if such a subject matter is considered, it may be difficult to conceptualise or imagine what the geographic landscape looked like before a war, during the war and after the war when peace and tranquility would have been restored to all parts of the "action space" of warfare.

In formulating this conceptual framework one may make a number of assumptions. First, the geographic space may be assumed to be a complete isotropic surface with no constraints to the free movement of the belligerent parties. This first assumption also notes that trafficability is uniformly spread in all directions. Apart from these basic assumptions, distribution of resources, both human and material, are also regarded as given. Given these initial assumptions, it is possible to predict within a reasonable limit of accuracy the spatial effects of war either between the belligerent parties or on the

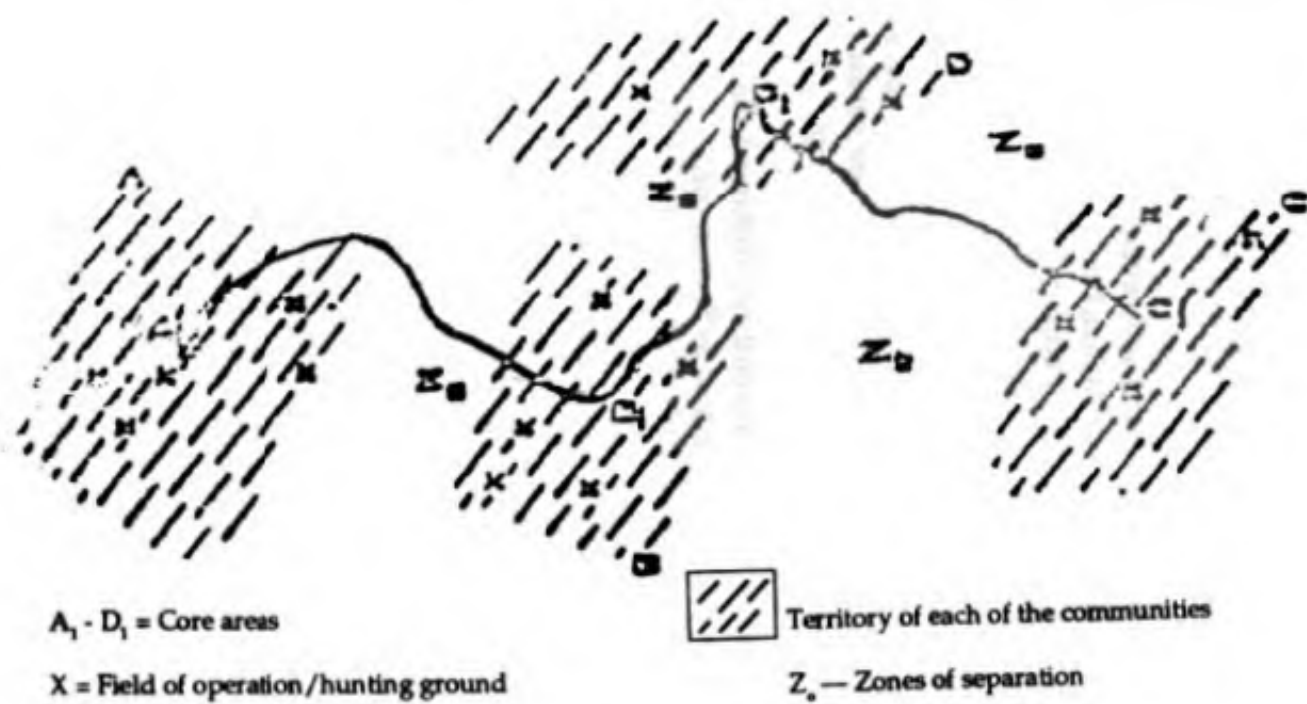


Fig.2.1: Spatial invasion of four independent communities/kingdoms



geographic space or "action space."

For the purpose of this exercise, let us recognise the presence of four different communities A, B, C, and D (the number of communities could be less or more) and all of them spatially located as in Fig. 1. In the pre-war period, the four hypothetical communities are not only independent of each other, but they also own the territories on which their members are settled. In this figure, settlements  $A_1$ ,  $B_1$ ,  $C_1$  and  $D_1$  represent the core areas of each of the four communities. Places marked  $a_1, a_2; b_1, b_2; c_1, c_2$ ; and  $d_1, d_2$  are fields of operation (farmlands) established by members of A, B, C, D communities residing in the core areas of  $A_1$ ,  $B_1$ ,  $C_1$  and  $D_1$ . Members of each community would interact and commute to such locations either to farm or hunt for game. Since the population concentrates in  $A_1$ ,  $B_1$ ,  $C_1$  and  $D_1$ , the geographic space that would probably be well known to members of each community would be the territory wherein they carry out their day and night activities. The stage described above is a peaceful stage during which every community has sufficient territory to itself. Thus there would be no competition or conflict over territorial units between the communities.

An important attribute of the geographic space of the peaceful stage is perhaps the absence or little inter-community linkages in terms of trade and social intercourse. And because of the undifferentiated economies of the space coupled with probably low technological know-how, there is little or no external stimulus to motivate increased production which would have led to community specialisation and increased demand for those goods and services not produced by each community.

As the population of the different core areas of the four hypothetical communities increase both over time and space, expansions would generally be towards the unoccupied frontiers between any two contiguous communities. Such expansion would lead to the founding of new settlements in the frontier region. A former frontier of separation thus becomes a frontier of contact where members of the converging communities interact, explore and exploit the available resources. Increased population pressure in the frontier area may rapidly deplete the available resources and members of the different communities may want to lay exclusive claims on parts of the frontier for the benefit of their own members. Studies have shown that inter-community competition for territorial units along their common frontiers may lead to war or violence during discussions on boundary delimitation or border rights between two communities<sup>3</sup>. The situation described above may in fact represent the first stage of spatial disequilibrium to an initially peaceful period of inter-community co-existence.

A number of events usually occur after the stage described above may have been reached. First, the different communities become increasingly aware of the presence and the locational potentials of one another. Secondly, interactions between the different communities become more intensive and usually lead to inter-community migration by sections of one community to another and thereafter the founding of new settlements. These spatial variations together with the principles of complementarity, transferability and intervening opportunity would influence members of the four hypothetical communities to interact at varying degrees of intensity. The spatio-territorial co-existence is such that it keeps each community as homogeneous as it is possible.

These peaceful stages in the inter-relationships of the different communities may gradually deteriorate into a stage of warfare if members of any of the communities seek to control the resources of another community. The need for this control by any of the four hypothetical communities may be motivated by either internal or external forces acting on the politico-economic system of the basic institutions of the communities.

This stage of inter-community conflict may be characterised by many events some of which would be readily apparent on the controlled landscape either during or after the conflict. First, many people are forced to abandon the scene of conflict and seek protection elsewhere. Such movements may lead to the establishment of new settlements and centres of population concentration made up of members of different communities. Thus increased population heterogeneity is one of the basic hallmarks of inter-community warfare. However, the movements and the fortunes of the belligerent parties involved in any war may be affected by physical as well as economic factors. These factors may influence the emerging political organisations and space partitioning either within a particular community or all the four hypothetical communities.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Extent and the Physical Environment of Yorubaland**

As a geographic unit, Yorubaland presently covers the whole of Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti and Ondo states and substantial parts of Kwara and Edo states in Nigeria. Yoruba people are also found in the Benin Republic and Togo. It is, therefore, valid to state that Yorubaland covers an area between latitude 4° and 8° 30' North and between longitudes 2° 15' and 6° East. Within the above latitudinal boundaries, it is clear that the Yoruba are located within the tropics.

The area occupied by the Yoruba is characterised by a humid tropical climate. While the coastal area has what is described as the equatorial tropical rain forest climate, the northern and the northern-western parts have wetter types of savanna climate.<sup>8</sup> In general, the area has a high annual mean temperature which increases northwards. The rainfall regime is of the double maxima, first in June/July and later in September/October following the oscillation of the ITCZ. Following this south to north variation in climate is a corresponding change in the vegetation from a Mangrove Swamp Forest along the coast, through the Fresh-Water Swamp Forest, the Lowland Rain Forest to a vegetation of tall grasses and small trees usually referred to as Guinea Savanna.

The rocks on which Yorubaland is found can be divided into a southern zone of sedimentary rocks and a northern part of igneous and metamorphic rocks. The latter are Pre-cambrian and they are crystalline in nature and consist of granite, gneiss and schists; and they are commonly referred to as the Basement Complex rocks. When weathered, some of the older granites give rise to smooth-domed hills known as inselbergs. These are common in both the forest and savanna areas of Yorubaland in places like Idanre, Ikere, Eruwa, Oke-Iho and Ado-Awaye. The sedimentary rocks are relatively younger rock types than the Pre-Cambrian rocks. They consist of various sandstones that are basically classified as older sedimentary rocks. Cuesta relief forms are the characteristics of these rocks and they are confined mainly to the lower parts of the southern Yorubaland especially Ijebu and Lagos areas. In fact, a large part of Yorubaland can be referred to as plains. However, the plains developed on the older rocks have greater relief than those on the sedimentary rocks and are therefore characterised by isolated hills and ranges marking outcrops of resistant rocks such as

porphyritic granites, quartz, schists and quartzites.

Sandy soils are prevalent on the sedimentary rocks while on the Basement Complex, a soil complex, in which clayey soils are dominant, has developed on the Pre-Cambrian rocks. Also because of the higher rainfall, the soil in the south has suffered more from leaching and is, therefore, generally poorer. Thus, as regards the two significant factors of a plant's physiological environment (i.e. soil and climate), it is the central part of Yorubaland that provides the best conditions. The south is handicapped by poorer soil while the north suffers from a drier climate. It is, however, pertinent to mention that except for small patches of rock outcrops, no large area outside the coastal swamps is rendered useless as a result of geomorphological characteristics.

### **Ethnic States in Yorubaland**

The political organisation of the Yoruba was based on the existence of kingdoms each under an *Oba* ruling with the aid of a council of chiefs, an elaborate military system and age-grade organisations. Some of the old kingdoms have since paled away in importance. In the 19th century, however, there was no doubt about the spatial influence of the Oyo Empire manifested both in its rise to power and in its decay. The empire owed its rise to power to its geographical position. In the first place it was situated on a fertile land where farming thrived very well. Besides, Oyo became the leading trading centre south of the Niger with many routes connecting it with most of the important markets of the period. Thus it became an important centre for gathering the produce of the rain forests to sell to people of the drier savanna.

### **Environments and Settlements in Yorubaland**

Many reasons always account for the location of settlements. Some of these reasons may include a search for a defensive site, agricultural land characterised by fertile soil and relatively flat surfaces, economic centres for exchange of goods between two dichotomous locations producing different products, availability of water and a nodal site. These reasons are considered here in relation to the environment and the role such reasons could play, or possibly played in the Yoruba warfare.

The importance of the climatic factor in human settlement in Yorubaland is significant, not only in relation to its effect on the character of the vegetation and soils but also because climate has, in no small way, played a dominant role in the ways of life and in the pattern of economic activities of the Yoruba. In addition, it has a great influence on the movement of troops during the war period. The climatic situation determines the type of crops that would be planted. While root and tree crops are usually cultivated in the wetter parts of Yorubaland, cereals (i.e. grains) and animal rearing are more common in the northern part. For instance, as a result of the climatic conditions cavalries were easily raised by the warriors of Oyo empire and later by the Ibadan warlords. However, this could not be done in the heavy rainfall areas of the south, firstly, because of the forest and secondly, as a result of the prevalence of tsetse-fly which was inimical to horses.

The relevance of forests to the occupation of a place is not far fetched. Normally, there is difficulty in clearing the humid and dense vegetation extensively. Consequently, large stretches of forest usually remain sparsely populated. However, it is



paradoxical that at present the most densely settled areas of Yorubaland are found in the forest zone (this phenomenon will be discussed in a later section). In fact, Mabogunje has suggested that in the early periods of Yoruba history the forest area was a refuge zone, providing, albeit temporarily, some degree of security from the aggressiveness of the stronger groups from the savanna area to the north.<sup>9</sup> Gleave has also observed that in response to the perpetual threat of attack, some people retreated from the grasslands to the towns of the neighbouring forest belt while new towns like Ibadan and Abeokuta grew up as converging points for refugees which later became militarily strong.<sup>10</sup>

The balance between the wet and dry seasons has encouraged the development and widespread exposure of infertile hard lateritic crusts. For these reasons, the Guinea savanna is a sparsely populated area. Added to this is its broken and rough topography which has inhibited the free movement of horse-riding invaders so that in the past this part of Yorubaland also served as a refuge zone for weaker groups of people. Such settlements include Eruwa, Oke-Iho and Ado-Awaye.

The importance of geology in the determination of human settlement in Yorubaland may not be particularly apparent. However, the strong correlation existing between geology on the one hand and topography and soil types on the other suggests that geology is also an important factor in the location of human settlement. In Yorubaland, therefore, topography was of great importance to the historical determination of human abode especially during the period of civil and religious wars. During these times, people did settle in hilly and rugged areas so as to take refuge from the attacks of more powerful groups. Such areas included Idanre, Ikare, Ado-Awaye, Oke-Iho, etc.

### **Yoruba Warfare and Spatial Patterns**

It is usual to adopt two basic principles in order to arrive at geographic explanations, that is, in finding the logical development of patterns on the earth's surface. The first of these principles is that geographical elements interact ecologically. That is each geographical element—topography, vegetation, population, human settlements etc — exists in an environment made up of other geographical elements. The second principle concerns the interactions between units as are on the earth's surface. However, there is a third principle which has been well articulated by the concept of historical geography, that the earth's surface at a given point in time is, in varying degrees, a product of previous interactions between places and elements. The problems of pursuing this third principle especially in a developing country in the humid tropics are many. Two of these problems include firstly, the lack of reliable historical data in the form of documents since the history of this area prior to the coming of the Europeans is usually based on oral traditions. The other problem concerns the fact that local artifacts lacked durable "land mark" architecture and as such old cities dissolved readily into the tropical biosphere. Nature is so powerful in the humid tropics that it takes comparatively few years to erase the imprints of a large population.

These problems notwithstanding, there is the necessity to look for historical antecedents in attempting to explain the present face of the earth in Yorubaland. For one thing, the universe of interactions observable today cannot alone explain every feature on the earth's surface. For another, a corollary to this basic tenet of historical



geography, is that present geographical patterns can act as keys to past happenings. This view is pregnant with relevance with regards to the attempts by historians and archaeologists to dig up the past. In the light of all these, this section sets out to show that at a point in time, the spatial structure of Yorubaland was closely and inseparably related to the instability (consequent upon the prolonged civil wars) which occurred in this areas over the greater part of the 19th century.

It is easy to conjecture what the spatial structures of the environment were prior to the period of the civil unrest in Yorubaland in the 19th century. In the southern part of Yorubaland were the climax vegetation cover consisting mainly of the high Tropical Rain Forest with scattered settlements located within the jungle. Agricultural practice at this time had little impact on the environment because subsistence farming was the order of the day. In effect, large-scale deforestation was unknown. To the northern part of Yorubaland was the Guinea Savanna with coarse grasses and trees. Unlike the situation in the forest, this area was more open for two main reasons. Firstly, the scattered nature of trees which, in any case, was not as robust as in the forest, made the place more open. Secondly, before the outbreak of the general civil unrest in Yorubaland, this part of the area had experienced a series of wars. All these resulted in some devastation of the land. In addition to this, the supremacy of Oyo over many other kingdoms to the west (Dahomey) and to the north (Borgu) accounted for the openness of the northern part of Yorubaland during this period since the movement of the Oyo army brought with it the founding of further settlements.

The Yoruba warfare of the 19th century brought with it the human occupation of hitherto uninhabited places and the subsequent deterioration of the physical environment as a result of the spatial spread of people. This spread of human population was more apparent in the forest areas. In response to the perpetual attack, or the threat of attack, many people retreated from the grasslands into the neighbouring forest belt to either found new settlements of their own or to settle in existing settlements. The new towns that sprang up as a result of these movements were usually militarily strong. Besides, the natural defences of the settlement were also taken seriously. For example, most settlements founded during this period were situated within a belt of forest which was deliberately allowed to retain its thick undergrowth and were accessible only by narrow paths leading to the gates. The defence of the settlements (especially relatively large towns) was made stronger by surrounding these towns with walls built, usually, of mud and in some cases settlements were surrounded with ditches. According to Ajayi and Smith, the defences often consisted of both an inner wall enclosing, on a generous scale, the built-up parts of the town and an outer wall which protected farmland and supplementary sources of water as well as providing a first line of defence behind which the home army and its allies could take positions before an attack as was the case in Osogbo in about 1840.<sup>11</sup>

The defensive strategies of some founders of certain settlements were different from those described above. In order to safeguard themselves against possible attack, and also in order to be at a vantage position, some settlements were built on the hills. This trend was common in both the savanna and the forest areas. Some examples of such settlements include Ado-Awaye, Eruwa, Oke-Iho, Igbeji, Abeokuta, Idanre, Ikere and Igbajo among others. Indeed, the establishment of Igbajo during the war period could not be in doubt. The town, situated within the hills, was founded by the co-

operative effort (and the name of the town implies a sort of co-operation) of the Oyo and the Ijesa people. Up to today, the people of Igbajo and Otan-Ayegbaju speak the Oyo and Ijesa dialects. The establishment of Ibadan on a hill during this period should also be noted. It served primarily as a collecting centre for refugees and subsequently became militarily so important during the 19th century that its military prowess was climaxed by its victory during the Ijaye War. Indeed, the establishment of some settlements in the hills was so impressive that T.J. Bowen writing about such sites asserted that nothing but the terror of war could have planted such settlements in such places as they were found.<sup>12</sup>

Another spatial aspect of the 19th century Yoruba warfare was the creation of many routes during the period. This was necessary in order to facilitate the movement of the armies. Apart from the caravan routes found in the savanna area of the Oyo empire, notable routes within the forest were also created. During the Ijaye War, for example, the Egba army moved from Abeokuta through Olokemeji to Ijaye. Similarly, there were other routes to the various kingdoms in the forest areas. However, while the warfare was causing in-migration and out-migration within the different sectors of Yorubaland it brought some restriction to the development of agriculture since people were usually forced to remain within the settlements especially during the war period thereby restricting them to the town's neighbourhood to plant food and field crops for their survival. The concentration of the population within a restricted boundary for agricultural practice during this period resulted in terrible deforestation of the immediate vicinities of the settlements. Indeed, Adejuwon has documented this phenomenon in his consideration of savanna patches within the forest areas of western Nigeria.<sup>13</sup> In a way, therefore, the settlements were scattered spatially and their impact on the environment was restricted to a controllable radius. It is, however, pertinent to mention that this does not mean that each kingdom or ethnic state did not continue to strive to expand its boundary in order to establish its hegemony over its territory. This was primarily the duty of the army.

Perhaps the spatial aspect of any warfare is better considered after its cessation. This is particularly the case with the Yoruba warfare. The first apparent effect was the devastation of many settlements. A very good example is Ijaye. Before the war, Ijaye used to be a very large town. But the devastation of the town reduced it to less than one-tenth of its original size. To date, Ijaye has not recovered from that devastation (see Fig. 2). Indeed, there were many settlements that were totally abandoned during the war. The remains of such settlements were once common in the savanna areas of Yorubaland.

The end of the Yoruba warfare also witnessed the abandonment of some settlements by the original inhabitants for new settlements they founded. Most of the settlements in this category were mainly those situated in the hills. The abandonment of such settlements in the western part of Yorubaland has been well documented by Gleave.<sup>14</sup> It appears that most of the hill settlers moved downhill primarily as a result of the restoration of peace. It is known further that such hill settlements could no longer satisfy the yearnings of the inhabitants with regard to expansionist and farming activities. Critically, there was also the likelihood of soil depth being a limiting factor to the cropping of the land. Gleave has also commented that this soil with a cover of trees, lower plants and solid rocks were observable on the summits and hollows housing these hill settlements. Therefore, apart from the relative peace, the people of

hill settlements also moved downhill for economic reasons. The example of Ado-Awaye could be given. From available evidence, it was clear that Ado-Awaye started to move partly immediately after the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo Peace Treaty. According to a government report of 1902, Ado-Awaye was described as a little town under Ado rock and another town on the rock. However, by 1913, when the first map evidence was available, the upper settlement had been abandoned.<sup>15</sup> Other towns that moved after the Yoruba warfare are Oke-Iho, Eruwa, Igbeti and Idanre. It is usual for the new settlements to be better planned than the abandoned ones. The spatial impact of these settlements downhill is seen in the widespread removal of the vegetation for various human activities.

The most outstanding spatial impact of the Yoruba warfare following the peace treaty was the systematic and effective colonisation of the forest area in Yorubaland. There is no doubt, whatsoever, that the migration of refugees which occurred during the Yoruba warfare was greater after the war. This migration into the forest has been documented by Adejuwon in the Ife Division of the present Oyo State<sup>16</sup>. Although this migration also had some economic undertone, it was basically engendered by the peaceful atmosphere prevailing after the war. For example, Adejuwon's survey in Ife Division showed that apart from Ife and the Origbo community towns of Asipa, Ipetumodu, Yakoyo, Moro and Edunabon, no other settlement was in existence before 1890. Between this time and 1910 more than 100 settlements had been established in Ife Division. One peculiar aspect of settlement locational relationship with topographical elements with respect to the "new" settlements is that none was founded on the hills. This pattern seems to indicate nothing but the fact that the settlers were sure of their safety since peace was prevailing and there was no cause to fear any invasion. To buttress this point, other studies in the area and other parts of the forest in southern Yorubaland have shown that most of the people in several of the settlements are "foreigners" who probably were refugees from the war torn areas of the savanna and the northern part of forest areas of Yorubaland.<sup>17</sup> It is pertinent to mention that the population diffusion process noticed in Ife region at this time was by no means restricted to the area. In fact, it was a common occurrence especially in the forest areas of Yorubaland where the cultivation of cocoa, a tree crop that brought prosperity (and probably still brings prosperity) to many a farmer, was spreading like bush fire. Even this process of cocoa cultivation – indicated that there was relative peace at the period. For example, cocoa was known to have been introduced into Nigeria in about 1874; and no widespread cultivation of it actually started until about 1886, thereafter Nigeria started to export the crop in about 1890.<sup>18</sup>

It can therefore be concluded that the end of the internal warfare in Yorubaland brought significant changes to the physical and human structures of the environment. Firstly, the occupied hilly areas were abandoned while more flat landscape were inhabited both in the savanna and in the forest. Secondly, agricultural practice on a wide scale started, especially, in the forest areas which were found to be very suitable for the new crop (cocoa) which later changed the fortunes of both farmers and governments of the area. Thirdly, it encouraged the construction of rural roads<sup>19</sup> which helped to open up the countryside of Yorubaland more than ever before. Fourthly, as a result of these processes, large-scale deforestation occurred and, today only in very remote areas, can climax tropical rain forest be found. Even within thick forests, savannisation of the



environment has occurred in areas surrounding the settlements where food cropping predominates. One consequence of the deforestation and savannisation processes is the deterioration of soil quality resulting mainly from surface exposure.<sup>20</sup> It is probably essential to indicate that vegetal replacement may not always be disadvantageous to man after all. At times, the crops provide a mosaic of man-made replacement of the original vegetation. This is very apparent in this region where tree crops such as cocoa, kola, coffee, rubber and oil-palm provide authropic evergreen vegetation as is common with the original rainforest.

## Conclusion

The main objective of this chapter has been to show the spatial impact of the 19th century wars on the cultural landscape of Yorubaland. Before highlighting some of the apparent spatial effects of the series of wars which came to an end in 1893 in Yorubaland, we had earlier on conceptualised the spatial inter-community relationships before, during and after hostility. The initial peaceful period was a period of little or no inter-community interaction. This initial period deteriorated into the second stage of warfare given a corresponding change in the socio-economic and political landscape of the different communities and those of extra-territorial communities. The final stage is that of stability during which further expansions were made away from the core areas of the different communities. It was also a period of consolidation when the political surplus were stabilized or incorporated into a larger system.

There is, however, the need to carry out more research into the geographical consequences of the 19th century warfare in Yorubaland than hitherto in the literature.



Fig.2.2: Sketch of Ijaye in 1860



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## **Chapter Three**

# **Wars In Yorubaland, 1793-1893: An Analytical Categorisation**

### **I. A. Akinjogbin**

A number of scholars have written on the 19th century period of Yoruba history. S.O. Biobaku, the first of modern historians to tackle the period, studied the rise of Abeokuta, one of the phenomenal consequences of the 19th century wars. J.F. Ade Ajayi, J.A. Atanda and R.C.C. Law have written a great deal on the fall of Oyo and its consequences. Bolanle Awe and S.A. Akintoye have studied the rise of Ibadan as a military power and the reactions of the Ekiti and other Yoruba groups to this rise. R.S. Smith has studied Yoruba warfare in the 19th century. Mabogunje and Omer-Cooper have done some work on Owu. Thanks to the efforts of these and other scholars, historians of Yoruba have progressed from regarding the Yoruba civil wars of the 19th century as senseless pursuits in which the sole purpose was to capture slaves for European market into seeing the complicated and principled causes of those wars. These scholars and a number of others who have taken cue from them have rightly seen the wars as the consequences of the collapse of the Oyo Empire which created a power vacuum that had to be filled. Smith said the wars "lasted over 70 years"<sup>2</sup> and he divided them into three periods, "from about 1820 to 1837, from about 1837 to 1878 and from 1878 to 1893"<sup>3</sup>. Others have not even bothered to break them into periods: choosing instead to see all the wars as one continuous episode.

This chapter is intended to show that the wars indeed lasted for about one hundred years from 1793 to 1893. Secondly and much more importantly, it is intended to show that over this length of period, the political aims and the character of the wars changed. Even though one could say that one war led to the next, all the wars cannot be treated as series of battles in a long war. Thirdly, the concentration on Oyo empire will also be slightly modified as we shall look at other parts of Yorubaland. Starting with a brief analysis of the 18th century background, the paper will attempt an analytical categorisation of the century long wars without going too deeply into the causes and consequences of the wars. The intention is to create a clear and comprehensive military and political picture of the events of that century in one single short publication, a picture that has not always been completely clear from the numerous publications so far available.

### **The 18th Century Background**

At the close of the 18th century, Yorubaland consisted of many major kingdoms; a similar number of smaller ones and some non-monarchical societies. Among the major kingdoms were Akure and Ekiti (or Efon), Egba, Ife, Igbomina, Ijebu (including Idoko) Ijesa, Ketu, Ondo, Owo, Owu, Oyo and Sabe. Among the smaller ones were Egbado

(or Awori) Akoko, Idanre and Idaisa. Those that had not yet been organised into kingdoms were the Owe, the Bunu, the Yagba, the Ufe Olukotun in the east, bordering on the confluence of the Niger and the Benue, and in the southwest, the Atakpame, the Ife Ana, the Yanturuku, the Oku etc. Among the major sections, the Ekiti were further sub-divided into about 16 independent kingdoms among them were Ijero, Ikere, Ado, Osi, Otun, Obo, Ido, Efon and others while Oyo was controlling all or substantial portions of Egba Egbado and Igbomina. In addition the Oyo kingdom had, since the end of the 17th century, expanded into a veritable empire, incorporating all or parts of such non-Yoruba speaking peoples as the Aja of the kingdom of Dahomey, the Southern Nupe and Bariba.<sup>4</sup> The geographical area covered by Yoruba speaking peoples and their dependencies at the end of the 18th century has been described as "lying roughly between the mouth of the Niger and longitude 1°E and between the sea coast and latitude 9°N".<sup>5</sup> In the whole of this area, roughly about 124,800sq. miles, the main language of commerce and social interaction was Yoruba.

These kingdoms and the non-monarchical societies did not constitute one single political state in the sense of having one unified army, a single political head with legislative and executive powers etc. Still less was it an imperial territory of one single emperor. Most of the kingdoms wielded independent political powers. It will be more useful to see the states as a common wealth of related kingdoms (*anebi* commonwealth) which were conscious of being bound together by their belief of having Ile-Ife as their *Orirun* from which all their kings went to their different domains and whither the spirits of the dead departed and finally rested. They also accepted Oduduwa, king of Ife around 11th century A.D., as their ancestor from whom each of them derived his constitutional right to wear the *ade ileke* (beaded crown). Over the centuries, the historical development arising out of these two tenets gave a similarity to Yoruba social organisation, political concepts, urban development, religious beliefs and moral codes. Ife was thus the place that welded all the Yoruba together, bringing to bear moral and religious sanctions on all aspects of life in the other kingdoms, be they political, religious or social, in a way that no other kingdom, not even the mighty Oyo Empire achieved. However, if Ife gave a sense of unity and belonging together to the Yoruba, the might of Oyo gave security and political stability to all in Yorubaland. As long as the Oyo army remained strong, not only the Empire but the rest of Yorubaland was protected from unnecessary internal turmoils and external attacks.

When a broad survey of all the Yoruba kingdoms in the 18th century is taken, the picture presented, from the little that is known so far, is one of peace, stability and prosperity. The traditions, constitutional provisions, the conventions and the various *eewo* (cultural taboos) appear largely accepted and respected. Their provisions regulated the actions of men and of their rulers who were judged against those norms whenever they erred.

A few examples will bear out this statement. Up to about 1780, the Oyo Empire remained at the peak of its military strength. Its economy was strong, its external trade in slave export unfortunately expanding<sup>6</sup>, its industries functioning and its craftsmen confident and proud of their workmanship.<sup>7</sup> There were quarrels between the ruling classes as to who would have a greater share of this growing wealth; with the successive *Alaafin*, apparently on one side, and the chiefs, led by the various *Basorun* of the period, on the other side.<sup>8</sup> Each side attempted to draw in the ordinary citizens, presenting itself



as their champion but it is doubtful whether the common people saw any difference between one group and another. In any case, the quarrels were always fought within the constitutionally laid down procedures – the chiefs would say that the king had been rejected, and the king would meekly take his own life after which a new king, from the same royal family, would be installed.<sup>9</sup> Some times the *Alaafin* would use his prerogative to choose a *Basorun*, that he thinks would be more friendly towards him, only to discover that between one *Basorun* and another, there was no difference in their relationship with the *Alaafin*.<sup>10</sup> The point being made is that, inspite of all these events, the economic conditions within the empire were good, life was safe, trade routes ran in all directions, some citizens were indeed noted to be fabulously rich and some of the *Alaafin* embarked on prestige projects.<sup>11</sup>

Information on 18th century Ife is scanty but the impression one has is also one of political stability and comfort. It is doubtful whether the 18th century of Ife history can be regarded as one of spectacular economic prosperity but from the absence of any remembered upheavals during the reigns of the *Ooni* of this period, one can reasonably conclude that the constitutional provisions worked smoothly. Indeed from the praise names of two of the *Ooni* of this period, Agbedegbede and Otutubiosun, it is obvious that the Ife saw the period as one of comfort and peace.

The Ijesa kingdom was, on its own side, very strong and stable during the 18th century. Starting with the reign of Atakumosa in the late 17th century, the Ijesa kingdom entered the 18th century as a militarily strong and expanding kingdom, bringing parts of Ekiti kingdoms under its wing. Its trade with Oyo and Benin was also on the increase, giving it a good economic base for its political expansion.<sup>12</sup>

Traditions available at Ado-Ekiti also indicate that such Ekiti kingdoms that were not subject to either Ijesa or Benin kept their political organisation intact and had a good economy. Two *Ewi* (the *oba* of Ado-Ekiti) reigned between 1720 and 1780. The *Ewi* Amono-Ola who reigned for about 40 years (1722–62) is remembered as having reigned long and peacefully, during which he did a great deal of repairs to buildings and monarchical reputations previously damaged.<sup>13</sup> His name "one who knows the road to riches" would also suggest that the economy was strong during his reign and his people were happy. His successor Afunbiowo (1762–81) whose name means "as white as money i.e. cowries", also suggests that the economic prosperity of the previous reign continued. The only complaint that traditional accounts had against him was that he was greedy and crafty but he was sufficiently strong to rule both Ado and Ijero kingdoms, under his own single monarchical authority.<sup>14</sup>

In Ofa, the two *Olofa* who can be confidently assigned to the 18th century were Olugbense and Aremu Agbojoye. During both reigns, remembered traditions, indicate that there was economic prosperity. There was however a major constitutional innovation by which succession to the throne was, by the king's law, changed from male to the female line. Still the monarchy remained strong.<sup>15</sup>

Information about Ijebu kingdom is very scanty. The 18th century was the period of the trans-atlantic slave trade along the Yoruba-Aja coast, but there was not much mention in contemporary documents of Ijebu participation in this trade. Ijebu may probably have participated in an insignificant way, particularly through its agricultural and manufactured products, but the fact that the authorities could ignore its allurements might mean that other sources of economic wealth continued to serve the



people satisfactorily. The *Awujale* of this period bore such names as *Atewogbuwa*, *Gbelegbuwa*, *Fusengbuwa*, which suggest peace and contentment.<sup>16</sup> The names of the age grades (*Egbe*) that can be assigned to the last three decades of the 18th century also indicate concern for normal internal events. Such names as *Lowuru*, *Legbeta*, *Ile-Segun*, *Motukoya* for the *Egbe* between 1780 and 1796 contrast very sharply with *Botewa*, *Kotetan*, *Otekase*, and *Kale* given to the *Egbe* between 1817 and 1832, when the *Ijebu* kingdom, like other parts of Yorubaland, was going through stirring military events.<sup>17</sup>

The final example is that of *Ketu*, perhaps the most important southwestern Yoruba kingdom, which is in the present Republic of Benin. *Adediran* has delimited the boundary of *Ketu* kingdom in the 18th century as "the region north of *Ilaro* and west of *Tibo*, bounded by the *Weme* in the West and *Opara* and *Oyan* in the North."<sup>18</sup> Within this area, the *Alaketu* ruled under a carefully balanced constitutional arrangement that prevented despotism by the king and frivolous depositions by his powerful chiefs. The Council of Chiefs collectively called *Kobalede* (teach the king how to speak) was a veritable parliament numbering between 60 and 70 persons around 1791. The economy was also buoyant as *Ketu* benefited from the trade routes leading from various places in *Dahomey* and *Porto Novo* to *Oyo*.<sup>19</sup>

The *Alaketu* in the last half of the 18th century were *Oje* 1748–60, *Ande* (for *Ayinde*) 1760–80 and *Akebioru* 1780–1795. During this period, indications are that the kingdom remained strong and prosperous. *Ande* had no difficulty triumphing over a *Dahomean* attack around 1760<sup>20</sup> and *Meko*, one of the *Ketu* towns actually became prosperous and ambitious during this reign. The next *Dahomean* attack in 1789 is variously claimed to be both successful and not. It is probable that in that attack, *Iwoye*, a nearby *Ketu* settlement, and not *Ketu* itself was surprised and looted before *Ketu* people got to know.<sup>21</sup> The general picture at the end of the 18th century was one of prosperity and power with the constitutional provisions working properly.

By and large therefore, from the scanty evidence so far available there is some ground to say that a large and politically significant portion of Yorubaland in the 18th century lived under stable political and social conditions, and had an economy that satisfied the wants of the majority with a few amassing riches. There were however indications of muted rumblings here and there, which were either temporarily resolved within the laid down rules or if they affected the non-ruling families, ignored.

We have already pointed to the continuous power tussle between the *Alaafin* and the *Oyomesi* in *Oyo* which endured for most of the 18th century. Johnson also shows that whichever side, *Alaafin* or *Basorun*, was in control made no difference to the common citizen who was invariably tyrannised and was progressively deprived of his civil rights and humanity. For example a king could, without qualms, behead his father-in-law for an indiscreet remark made in the bathroom by the latter's daughter, the king's wife.<sup>22</sup> A son of *Basorun*, could shoot dead a hard working farmer by saying he mistook him for an antelope as he bent down hoeing his farm without his being punished for murder. Or he could behead a female trader carrying heavy merchandise on the morbid joke that he thought her thick neck (from the effect of heavy load) could not be cut by a sword<sup>23</sup>. *Adebayo Faleti* has shown in his book *Omo Olokun-Esin*, how a prince could appropriate a bride being taken to her husband's house, assault her with impunity

in broad daylight under the open sky with drapes of cloth as enclosure.<sup>24</sup> Such lawless and cruel acts drew from the downtrodden citizens muted complaints which have been preserved in apparently humorous chants<sup>25</sup>

### **Rebellion, 1793–1817**

In 1793, trouble broke out at the Apomu market,<sup>26</sup> significantly between Ife and Oyo, the two kingdoms on which stability and peace in Yorubaland depended. From then on until 1893, it was one war after another for a hundred years. These wars can be categorised into six types, including those of external invasion. The first type were wars of rebellion which went on from 1793 to 1817. The characteristic features of these wars were a general dissatisfaction with and rejection of the existing laws, norms and practices,<sup>27</sup> by both the ruling classes and the common citizens for different reasons. It was characterised by chaos when the military refused to obey orders from the political authority but did not itself immediately take over political governance. This was the period when large flourishing towns within the metropolitan districts of the Oyo empire were destroyed together with a large amount of their former group consciousness. The little that is known indicates clearly that things had indeed fallen apart, the centre could no longer hold and there was disobedience and lawlessness everywhere. When the *Alaafin* Awole ordered Ajimu to be sacked in 1793, the army did not set out. When he ordered Iwere to be attacked in 1796, the army revolted and asked the king to "go to sleep" which he did. Adebo who succeeded him could not stem the tide of confusion and he died after a very short reign of less than five months. When another *Alaafin* was put on the throne bearing the prayerful name of Maku (don't die), he could not get enough support and had to die. After him no *Alaafin* could be installed for perhaps as long as 20 years.

The long interregnum was the signal for a large scale destruction of flourishing towns and villages within the metropolitan districts of the Oyo empire. As from the death of Awole in 1796, powerful men collected individual armies and started attacking various towns not with any intention to protect the citizens or maintain peace. Opele the *Baale* of Gbogun, and Afonja, the *Aare-ona-kakanfo* in nearby Ilorin played the most prominent roles in the destructive episodes. There were probably countless other bullies whose names have been lost to history, and who, then fearing no possibility of punishment by any lawful authority, roamed the countryside creating terror and panic.<sup>28</sup> To get their individual armies, they encouraged slaves to rebel and assert their freedom and enlisted free citizens who were hardly better treated than slaves and who were groaning under the tyranny of the ruling classes. Opele died early in this rebellious phase, leaving Afonja the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo*, as the sole powerful man who then went ahead and cowed down the whole of Igbomina and what is now the Osun area (then called Epo) into subjection.

The alliance between him and some of the disloyal Oyo chiefs which toppled Awole and incapacitated Adebo and Maku broke down when the Oyo chiefs belatedly realised that Afonja was serving, not the imperial, but his own interests. An attempt to bring him down, using Ojo Agubambaru, a surviving son of *Baorun* Gaha, who was disgraced in 1774, failed because the Onikoyi changed allegiances from being pro-Oyo to being pro-Afonja.<sup>29</sup> Consequently Afonja continued successfully to terrorise the Igbomina and the Epo (i.e. Osun) areas until 1817. It was a truly dark era in Yoruba history both

for lack of the details of events and the amount of misery of the refugees running from one beleaguered town to another in singles, families or in unrelated groups without the faintest idea of where and when they might find succour. How many wars were fought and how many towns were destroyed during this period can only be revealed by more research and extensive archaeological expedition in this area. Certainly, physical destruction of flourishing towns, villages and farms were rampant, the population movement was immense and the effect on the people in the destruction of former group memories and the creation of new ones has remained permanent, till the present day.

It was not only within the core of the Oyo Empire that chaos went on during these 25 years. It also occurred in the Owu kingdom. If the salient phenomenon in Oyo was that internal authority broke down, in Owu the central issue was the breakdown of the hitherto accepted norms of relationship between the various Yoruba kingdoms.

As already noted, all Yoruba kings, and by extension their subjects accepted Ife as their *Orirun* and respected her as such. From Ife they were consecrated for their reigns; there, their war staff, the *Opa Oranyan*, was blessed before they embarked on any war,<sup>30</sup> and the most crucial consultations of Ifa, affecting the lives of the citizens were very often undertaken at Oke Itase in Ife. Most importantly the spirits of the departed ancestors were believed to be resting finally at Ife. This last belief distinguished Ife from any other Yoruba town as it was thus accepted as an eternal and sacred city. Ife authorities on their own, set apart separate days of prayers and Ifa consultations for the various kingdoms and frequently sent messages to each kingdom if issues affecting them were revealed by Ifa and if any propitiations were required of them. Because of these beliefs, practices and duties, it was accepted that no Yoruba kingdom should militarily attack Ife or in any way desecrate its land.<sup>30</sup> The refusal of the Oyo army to set out in 1793 against Apomu which was situated in Ife kingdom, may have been significantly due to this convention, if not law, even though the *Alaafin's* face had to be saved by getting the *Bale* of Apomu to commit suicide.

However, between 1797 and 1817, Owu threw overboard these beliefs and conventions and attacked the Ife kingdom allegedly with the active encouragement of Adegun the ruler of Ikoyi and Toyeye the ruler of Ogbomoso who was also the *Otun Kakanfo*.<sup>31</sup> It was a sign of the times, that the same leaders of the Oyo army that had refused to attack Ife territory in 1793, now colluded with Owu in such an attack. The Owu attack was so successful that for ten miles only one town, Ipetumodu, stood between its army and Ile-Ife, all the others having been effectively conquered. This must have horrified other Yoruba kingdoms and individuals who knew the respect normally given to Ife as the resting place of their departed ancestors. Ife's attempt to reply in kind, by hurriedly collecting an army and putting up a military counter attack, failed disastrously, in spite of its overwhelming confidence on setting out. The remnant of its army could not return home but instead stayed at Adunbicieye, near Iwo, for five years according to tradition, waiting for reinforcement.<sup>31</sup> Presumably the Owu were controlling the conquered areas during this period.

Such widespread rebellion and lawlessness as were going on in Oyo and between Owu and Ife were bound to be known to and make an impression on all the other Yoruba kingdoms. For one thing the area affected by the rebellion and lawlessness was more than 60 percent of the total Yorubaland area. Secondly, it harboured the largest proportion of the population as the most populated towns and cities were within the



central core of the Oyo Empire. Thirdly, Ife and Oyo constituted the main pillars of stability and unity in Yorubaland. Other kingdoms were therefore doomed sooner or later to be affected.

### Revolution, 1817 to 1830

By 1817 the rebellious and chaotic phase had started to give way to the revolutionary phase characterised by attempts to create a permanent change. During this phase, the Owu kingdom in the south and Ilorin in the north again separately played the leading roles. The Owu war is usually accepted as starting in 1821, over trivial issues. According to traditions, it arose over an argument in Apomu market between an Ijebu woman and an Owu man over the purchase of some quantity of guinea pepper. Other people gathered around and in the general affray another pregnant Ijebu woman had her salt tray overturned by a young Owu boy who happened to be the son of the *Akogun*, the market officer. While the *Akogun* was trying to restore peace, he unwittingly cut the Ijebu woman, who later bled to death. The two incidents were reported to the *Awujale*, who might have been either Setejoje or Anikilaya Sagun, and who immediately raised an army against Owu.<sup>32</sup> His army was immediately joined by the Ife and the wandering Oyo refugees.

However, when this tradition is viewed from within the context of the events in Yorubaland since 1797, it is not difficult to see that the Apomu market incident was but the proverbial last straw on the camel's back and that the causes for this war must be seen within the context of the general breakdown of law and order and particularly the breach of the *eewo* that forbade Ife territory from being attacked.

What made this war different from those of the 1793–1817 period is in its nature and political objective. It was a war of total destruction, the like of which contemporary Yoruba could not recall in their long history. In the war, which lasted from 1821 to 1825 European guns were first used and the whole kingdom of Owu, comprising such prominent towns as Erunmu, Okolo, Mowo, Ogbere as well as the capital town, Owu was destroyed and its population scattered. Moreover, most probably because of the breach of the *eewo*, a curse was said to have been laid on the capital city, Owu, that it must never again be reinhabited.<sup>33</sup> Such was the bitterness with which the war was fought.

What was more, the nearby Egba kingdom which had not in anyway been overtly involved in the original problems got punished for not joining in the Owu war one way or the other. The victors accused the Egba of secretly helping the Owu during the war, while some surviving Owu laid siege against some Egba towns accusing them of not coming to their succour. In the process the Egba towns became divided, some joining the aggrieved Owu to fight other Egba towns, while between 1825 and 1827 the victorious army of Ijebu, Ife and Oyo continued to burn one Egba town after another. The result was that the Egba kingdom, consisting of about 300 towns and villages which had only become independent of Oyo less than 50 years before, was by 1827 also destroyed and its population dispersed.<sup>34</sup> A section of the victorious army then proceeded to Ijebu, settled at Ipara and successfully attacked Ode, Iperu, Ogere and Makun (now Sagamu) all in Ijebu Remo. However, they quickly turned back to continue the destruction of the Egba towns. The trauma that the destruction of the two kingdoms caused on the surviving population can only be imagined. Contemporaries regarded it



as revolutionary in the sense of a violent and complete break from the past. Thirty years after, the ruins were still evident and the events constituted the main political discussion among the generality of Yoruba peoples. On 4 June, 1851 barely three weeks after Hinderer, the first European missionary, arrived in Ibadan he noted in his diary:

"This afternoon, I rode out to the place of old Owu which is only two miles from my lodging. Owu was an old very large town composed of the whole tribe of that name. It was destroyed about thirty years ago and is now converted into farms by the Ibadan people but main ruins still remain... To think of the awful and bloody scenes such a large place must have witnessed at the time of its destruction makes one shudder(sic) and feel indignant..."<sup>23</sup>

In December 1854 Hinderer passed through the ruins of some of the old Egba towns on his way to Ijebu-Ode. He mentioned eight of them which were Iru, which he described as a small town, Ikereku Were, Ikereku Idan, Orun, Idumapa, Ikija over which he took an interest because it was Ogunbona's native town, and Ikereku-Nla. He observed that "this town, (i.e. Ikereku-Nla) and Ikija must have been particularly pleasantly situated, with the large hollow in the middle, the shape of a cradle, its even borders must have presented a most pleasing sight when a town." He also passed by the Gbanamu hills "where the Ife division under General Maye of Ife was encamped at the time when war was in its highest ferment and the Egba towns and villages were laid waste" and near where "Maye the Commander-in-Chief of the enemy was at last caught and killed." These and other details were given to Hinderer who concluded that "a book full of touching interests might be written on the late Yoruba and Egba wars"<sup>24</sup> Such was the vivid and permanent impression which the revolutionary Owu and Egba wars left in the minds of the contemporary Yoruba.

Almost simultaneously with the Owu and the Egba wars, Ilorin was converting its own rebellion into a revolution leading to a permanent change from an old order to a new order. Those who had participated in the rebellion in central Oyo kingdom had done so for various reasons, and had chosen to follow various leaders according to how they saw that leader's ability to satisfy their desires. Among those who followed Afonja were large numbers of Hausa, both animists and muslims. Significant among the followers however were large numbers of Yoruba Muslims under a recognised leader, called Solagberu (or Solagbemi), Afonja's friend. Solagberu collected all the muslim followers of Afonja, whether Yoruba or not, and settled with them in a place called *Oke Suna* (the quarters of the faithfuls) in Ilorin. He decided to create a sense of oneness among his heterogenous group by making all of them to wear a ring called *Kande*.<sup>25</sup> Afonja's quarters comprised all non-Muslim Yoruba and those Fulani who by then had not converted to Islam. It must be presumed that Solagberu led his own Islamic group to the various battles fought under the general authority of Afonja who had no reason to suspect that Solagberu might usurp his authority.

Two things however happened between 1816 and 1824 which changed the situation. First in 1816 the Jihad, which had been raging in the Hausa kingdoms since 1804 was extended to Nupe (Tapa) next door, so to say, to Yorubaland and the newly converted Nupe lost no time in declaring war against the Akoko and Akoko-Edo in eastern Yorubaland.<sup>26</sup> The second thing that happened was that Afonja in 1817 invited Alimi, the Fulani itinerant Muslim preacher to Ilorin. Alimi was not new in Yorubaland, for from about 1813, he had been going round such northern Yoruba large towns as far as

Ikoyi and Ogbomoso. He had lived for three years in Kuwo, Solagberu's town, and was intending to settle there when Afonja heard of him and decided to invite him to Ilorin.<sup>37</sup> He must therefore be presumed to have known Yorubaland fairly well and also to have been conversant with the on-going Fulani jihad. Afonja was not a Muslim and the invitation could have been conceived solely as a means of strengthening his military might with the charms that the Muslim preacher was expected to prepare. However for Solagberu, who had earlier been invited by Afonja also from Kuwo and who might have known Alimi there, Alimi's arrival could be seen as an important addition to his *jama'a* at Oke-Suna. There is indeed a distinct probability that Solagberu might have influenced Afonja's invitation of Alimi to Ilorin, although the aim is not clear.

A number of discerning citizens clearly saw the danger in the new scenario, but so afraid of Afonja were most of them that they did not dare to tell him. Two persons however took courage. The first was Fagbohun, the commander of the left flank of Afonja's army, who thereby incurred his wrath and had to flee to avoid being executed. The second person was Agborin, Afonja's younger brother, but so confident was Afonja of his own ability that he again brushed the warning aside. Frustrated, Agborin committed suicide.<sup>38</sup>

Alimi lost no time in creating his own Muslim community. Instead of joining Solagberu's group, he started gathering under himself all the Fulani who had hitherto been directly under Afonja. Starting with Ul-Fadi, the chief of the cattle Fulani, who initially acted as the interpreter between him and Afonja. Thereafter, all or almost all the Fulani soon joined Alimi's party. By the time that Alimi died, around 1823, he controlled a sizeable Muslim group<sup>39</sup> and maintained a cautious friendship with Solagberu and his *Jama'a* at Oke-Suna. Alimi's death was followed by a tussle over who should head his group. Some people who looked at their community in religious terms favoured one Bako, a Hausa Muslim scholar who had been a companion of Alimi. Others who saw it in terms of political succession favoured Abdulsalam, Alimi's son, even though he was probably not as learned as Bako. Solagberu threw his weight behind Abdulsalam because of his friendship with the late Alimi. Abdulsalam was thus elected leader of the group. Obviously Solagberu did not see Abdulsalam as anything other than a leader of his own group, just as he, Solagberu, was leader of his and indeed Afonja was still alive.

However Abdulsalam saw other possibilities in the Islamic jihad then going on and bid his time. After the battle against a town called Sawo, in Igbomina, Abdulsalam realised the military strength of his followers and picked up a quarrel against Afonja at the first convenient opportunity. This was around 1824. Afonja regretfully remembered the warning given him by Agborin and Fagbohun and appealed to Solagberu for help but the latter refused<sup>40</sup> probably on the grounds of his commitment to Islam and friendship with Abdulsalam's father, both of which Abdulsalam would not remember when he was ready to deal with Solagberu. After all Afonja was Alimi's benefactor but that did not stop Abdulsalam from planning to overthrow him. In the circumstances, Afonja was conquered and his quarters of Ilorin together with all the survivors was annexed. Abdulsalam's power in Ilorin thus became preponderant and he soon put Solagberu in his place by soundly defeating him militarily when belatedly the latter tried to dispute authority with him.<sup>41</sup> With Solagberu out of the way, probably around 1825 or 1826, Abdulsalam became the ruler of Ilorin and heir to the whole of the

Igbomina and Epo area which Afonja had kept under his own authority since about 1797. Those who had led the rebellion finally lost the revolution. Abdulsalam subsequently sent for a Jihadist's flag from Sokoto which he secured as Emir of Yoruba, under the Emirate of Gwandu. He then declared a Jihad against the whole of Yorubaland.<sup>42</sup>

### **Consolidation and Resistance, 1826–1840**

The total destruction of flourishing Yoruba kingdoms, Owu and Egba, the loss of a large chunk of Yorubaland to a completely foreign ruler and the threat that the rest might be taken over must have brought about the belated realisation by the Yoruba of the awful consequences of their disunity and shortsighted political actions since 1797. Around 1826, the powerful chiefs still remaining in metropolitan Oyo met at Ikoyi to discuss the issue of unity among the Yoruba and how the current menace was to be combatted. As a first step they were all to renew their allegiance to the *Alaafin*. The meeting flopped allegedly because the *Alaafin* (probably Majotu) for some inexplicable reason sent a messenger whose title indicated implacability on the part of the king.<sup>43</sup> However, the circumstances of the period must be held largely responsible for the failure of the Peace Conference. After 30 years of rebellion and many acts of changing alliances and of bad faith among the rulers and the ruled alike, when everyone thought of his own safety first and did not quite trust even his nearest relation, it would have been miraculous if a single meeting, no matter under what threat, solved all the problems, dissolved all the suspicions and rancour and brought instant unity.

Yet inspite of this apparent failure, the 1826 meeting created a consciousness for the need for concerted action and a determination that Yorubaland must not be allowed to be taken over by foreigners. This then was the political objective of the wars fought between 1826 and 1840, when the Yoruba took the initiative to seek allies to fight their common enemies. Once again, there were initially two phases, the northern and the southern, which merged together after 1837. The northern phase consisted largely of military chiefs around Ikoyi, Gbogun, Ogbomoso and Oyo Ile with their Nupe and Borgu allies at different times making desperate attempts to take over Ilorin from the Muslims and particularly from the Fulani rulers. Johnson recorded three major attempts up to about 1831.<sup>44</sup> The first was the Ogele War, the second was the Mugbamugba War in which Monjia, the anti-Fulani, anti-Muslim Etsu of Nupe, allied with the Oyo, and the third, after some respite, was the Kanla War. Around 1836, Oyo Ile, the old imperial capital was conquered and abandoned after a desperate battle in which the Bariba (Borgu) army joined the Yoruba to drive the Fulani away from Ilorin. A new Oyo was established in the present site by Atiba in 1837.

Each of these wars was lost by the Yoruba largely because of what Johnson called "the want of foresight and the vaulting ambition of their rulers". It is purely amazing how in the face of the danger which they all saw, the leaders kept thinking in terms only of their own selfish interest or their own importance and could not combine to fight a common enemy. The various rulers of Ikoyi, Ogbomoso, Gbogun and Ilorin kept fighting for irrelevant issues of precedence one over the other. In addition, the Fulani at Ilorin played a consummate diplomatic and political game. They played one powerful Yoruba leader against another in the same town and one powerful Yoruba town against another until they eliminated each other and the Fulani destroyed or took over each



town.<sup>44</sup> Defeat in the successive wars discouraged the common Yoruba soldiers and their commanders – and they tended to concede victory to the Fulani even before the battle was joined. The fact that Ilorin Muslims had cavalry forces and the Yoruba did not have further put the Yoruba at a disadvantage in an open warfare in savannah area. Still the desire to drive the Fulani rulers out of Yorubaland remained.

While these disasters were going on in the metropolitan district of Ekun Osi in the north, significant events which would roll back the misfortunes were going on in the south. Some Oyo who had participated in the Owu war decided to found new permanent settlement at Ibadan, an Egba village that had escaped being destroyed. Between 1828 and 1835, they weathered all oppositions to the foundation of their new town and consolidated their administrative and military machineries.<sup>45</sup> During the same period, roaming Oyo soldiers occupied Ijaye, first under the redoubtable leadership of Dado and later that of indomitable Kurunmi.<sup>46</sup> By 1837 when the New Oyo (Ago-Oja) was founded by Atiba, these two new towns harboured brave and tested military leaders some of whom descended from chieftaincy families in old Oyo Ile. These leaders saw their mission as continuing the wars of resistance against the Fulani until the latter were completely driven out of Yorubaland.<sup>47</sup> Atiba shared their determination and resuscitated old titles and bestowed them on the rulers of the new towns. To Kurunmi of Ijaye, he gave the title of Aare-Ona-Kakanfo and the responsibility to defend the western part of the old Oyo Empire which was being threatened by the newly independent kingdom of Dahomey. To Oluyole of Ibadan, he gave the title of Basorun with responsibility to defend the eastern parts, which included the Ilorin menace.<sup>48</sup> The northern and the southern phases of resistance were thus merged. Ibadan was so successful that in 1840 it defeated the Fulani army at Osogbo and thus started to recover some of the lost Yoruba towns.<sup>49</sup> This victory not only restored the morale of the Yoruba military but also encouraged the Ekiti towns to invite the Ibadan to help them chase out the Ilorin who had been threatening their northern towns such as Osi, Otun, Aisegba, Ikole and Itaji since about 1835–36. The Ibadan response to this invitation, led to the expansionist wars of Ibadan.<sup>50</sup>

### **Wars of Invasion (1821–1864)**

It was not only from the Fulani rulers at Ilorin that the Yoruba were being threatened. There were also threats from their extreme south-western neighbours. Started in about 1821 by Gezo, the king of Dahomey, the threats were largely contained by Abeokuta and had petered out by 1864. The kingdom of Dahomey had been part of the Oyo Empire informally from about 1680 and effectively from 1730 onwards.<sup>51</sup> However around 1821, Gezo, who in 1818 had seized power from Adandozan, the incumbent king, revolted against the imperial authority of Oyo.<sup>52</sup> For Dahomey, there could hardly have been a better time to revolt. For Oyo, this event occurred at a particularly hard time with the Aare-Ona-Kakanfo openly in revolt, the Oyo army weakened by mutual suspicions and distrust among its leaders, and the common soldiers having gone off to join the Owu war. No army could therefore be sent to crush the revolt. The contingent that was recruited in Ilaro was easily routed around 1823. Gezo took the opportunity of the obvious weakness of Oyo to attack the Egbado provinces, particularly Ilaro, Ijanna and Refufu, which were probably the most promising economic centres in the area.<sup>53</sup> The attacks were not just dictated by the desire for vengeance, but also for solid



economic reasons as Dahomey needed fertile agricultural lands to replace the vanishing slave trade economy. Although this invasion into Egbado (and later Abeokuta) continued desultorily until the end of the century, it recorded no significant success after 1835. The founding of Abeokuta in 1830 effectively checked the Dahomean ambition though not without some anxious moments in 1851 and 1864 when Dahomey mounted determined invasions on Abeokuta.<sup>52</sup> One permanent effect of the successful revolt of Dahomey was that it effectively cut off the extreme south-western Yoruba speaking areas around Atakpame from the rest of the Yorubaland. These, like those in far north-east, did not have centralised kingdoms and were therefore unable to resist Dahomean authority. The fact that they were later demarcated by the colonial powers into different French speaking countries is hardly helpful in our attempt to reconstruct their being part of the Yorubaland.

### **Ibadan Expansionist Wars, 1840–1878**

From 1840 onwards, and on the invitation of the Ekiti, Ibadan continued its patriotic duty of protecting Yorubaland from its Fulani invaders. This inevitably led into Ibadan expansion, the main political thrust of this period. By 1865, Ibadan had grown to become the strongest political force in Yorubaland. In those 25 years, virtually all the Oyo speaking areas, the Ife kingdom, the Ijesa kingdom, the whole of Ekiti, Akoko and Yagba, came under what has been called the Ibadan empire from which the Fulani invaders had been driven out. So successful was Ibadan that the Ijebu kingdom and the Egba state constantly suspected, not without reason, that Ibadan might want to take them over as well as become "Master of the whole world."

How Ibadan went about its expansion has been traced in two excellent works<sup>53</sup> and we shall do no more here, than to recapitulate. The towns between Iwo and Ede did not need much persuasion to join Ibadan in repelling the Fulani invasion from Ilorin since they had been under constant Fulani threat from about 1835. After the 1840 victory, they remained with the Ibadan conquering army. The Ife towns of Ikire, Gbongan and Origbo which had been deserted from about 1835 and had largely moved to Ife, returned to their old settlements around 1847, when Modakeke was also constituted into a separate town. In that year, because of the influence of Ajobo, an Ikire warrior in Ibadan, Ikire declared allegiance to Ibadan.<sup>54</sup> In 1849, the Ife-Modakeke war caused Ife to be evacuated and it took the Ibadan to reconcile both parties in 1854 and resettle Ife in its town. As a result of this service, all the remaining Ife towns including the newly founded Modakeke joined Ibadan.<sup>55</sup>

In contrast to this comparatively peaceful expansion, the expansion into Ekiti and Ijesa kingdoms was by military conquest. Both before and after the defeat of Ilorin at Osogbo in 1840, the Ilorin Muslims had been making incursion into the Igbomina, Ekiti and Ijesa kingdoms. After their victory in 1840, the Ibadan repelled the Ilorin army to as far as Offa beyond which they could not proceed because of Ilorin cavalry. They also decided to dislodge the Ilorin from such parts of the Ekiti country as the latter were threatening.<sup>56</sup> True in the 1840s, the Ilorin could not be said to have occupied any part of Ekiti kingdoms, but there was no mistaking their ambition in that direction. Otun, being a frontier town between Ekiti and Igbomina, and one which harboured a large number of Oyo refugees, bore the brunt of Ilorin attack. In 1847, Otun called on Ibadan

to defend it against Aaye, one of its subordinate towns which was being supported in rebellion by Ilorin. Between 1847 and 1848, the Ilorin were dislodged from Aaye and nearby Ekiti towns such as Iyapa, Oro, Usi and such Igbomina towns as Ekan and Omuaran were conquered. Between 1853 and 1854, the Ijesa kingdom was conquered and between 1854 and 1855, the whole of Ekiti and Akoko were conquered, all in the attempt to prevent the Fulani from making an in-road into any part of Yorubaland. The Ilorin realistically conceded superiority to Ibadan in the Ekiti kingdom.<sup>36</sup> The leaders of Ibadan during these expansionist era were Ibikunle the *Balogun*, Ogunmola his *Otun* and Osundina his *Osi*. Many other famous men in later Ibadan history participated in these expansionist campaigns.

After such spectacular successes, there was a short period of relative calm and peace in Yorubaland. Ibikunle the *Balogun*, reached peaceful accord with Ijebu and the Egba and in 1854 summoned a peace conference at Ibadan where all the Yoruba agreed on the need for unity, peaceful resolution of differences among themselves and to stop enslaving any Yorubaman.<sup>37</sup> This state-man-like move towards unity and peace among the Yoruba speaking peoples, was as in 1826, unfortunately rendered ineffective by deep rooted jealousies, suspicions and selfishness. The jealousy and suspicion came from Kurunmi who saw the venue of the meeting as an acknowledgement of Ibadan's superiority over his own town, Ijaye. He probably also felt affronted to be summoned to a meeting by people who were contemporaries of his own children. He reckoned, therefore, that Ijaye would be the next town to be attacked in order to make Ibadan's superiority complete. Instead of pursuing policies that would reflect the spirit of the conference, he immediately started to prepare for an eventual war with Ibadan.<sup>37</sup> The selfishness was exhibited by *Alaafin* Atiba who saw the peace conference only as a first step towards bringing the Oyo speaking area of Yorubaland under his authority once again by encouraging one of Ibadan or Ijaye to liquidate the other. It was probably during this conference that Atiba agreed with Ibadan without Ijaye's knowledge to instal Adelu, the *Aremo*, as the next *Alaafin* after Atiba, contrary to the tradition which stipulated that the *Aremo* must die with his father, the *Alaafin*. Thus, Ibikunle's astute move did not have a chance of lasting success.

Predictably, the next war was between Ibadan and Ijaye over two major issues. Adelu's succession to Atiba in 1858 was supported by Ibadan but opposed by Kurunmi. Kurunmi's opposition was based on his upholding the old constitutional practice while Ibadan argued that a new era had dawned.<sup>38</sup> Apart from this fundamental disagreement on constitutional issues, there was also the issue of giving the *Alaafin* a little more territory to increase his income. The Ibadan suggested that *Aare* Kurunmi should concede some area in the Oke-Ogun area, but conceded no part of its own territory. The *Aare*, naturally, refused to concede particularly to someone he had not yet recognised as the *Alaafin*.<sup>38</sup> Although unstated by the Ibadan, Kurunmi suspected since 1855 that there was a determination on the part of at least a powerful section of Ibadan to end the Ijaye rivalry and become the undisputed military power in Yorubaland.

Ibikunle, the *Balogun*, now an old man, tried very hard to prevent the war. For a man, who, since 1851 had tried to resolve most problems all over Yorubaland peacefully whenever possible, who had successfully cleared a large part of Yorubaland of foreign invaders and who had just presided over a successful conference of all the leaders of Yorubaland where peace, unity and friendship were agreed upon as basic policy tenets

and as a way of discouraging foreign adventurers, a war with Ijaye would be a negation of every thing he had stood for. More than that, it would be a leap backwards to the dark days of the revolutionary wars of 1817 to 1830. He therefore tried very hard to dissuade those who wanted war using arguments that would appeal to their emotions. He reminded them that different members of the same families inhabited the two towns and quoted statistics. It was not right, he said, that these should now rise against one another. He said that Kurunmi belonged to the generation of their fathers and should therefore be honoured and treated with patience since he would soon pass away and his successors might be less conservative.

But the younger generation appeared to have forgotten the original protective mission of Ibadan. As a result of their successes since 1840, they now saw Ibadan as the undisputed military power that must be so recognised by every other section of Yorubaland or face the awesome consequences. Ogunmola, the *Otun Balogun*, who headed this group therefore remained adamant to Ibikunle's emotional argument. He also had the backing of *Alaafin* Adelu who favoured that Ijaye should be tamed and brought under Oyo's authority. When it appeared that civil-war might break out in Ibadan over the issue, Ibikunle agreed to the war which was fought in Ijaye between 1859 and 1862.<sup>59</sup> The Egba joined the Ijaye against Ibadan and the Christian Missionaries stationed in the three towns of Ibadan, Abeokuta and Ijaye shared in the emotions of their respective abodes. In the end, Ijaye was destroyed and a large part of its population moved to Abeokuta.<sup>60</sup> Its territory was annexed by Ibadan.

The success of Ibadan in this war made the Ijebu apprehensive of their own political future. Therefore, they wanted to stop Ibadan from having a direct route to the arms market in Lagos through Ipara and Ikorodu in Ijebu Remo. The Egba who had just been routed in the Ijaye war, were also interested in preventing Ibadan from procuring arms further. So both the Egba and the Ijebu armies invaded Makun, occupied Iperu and laid siege to Ipara the three towns which were allies of Ibadan. Ibadan came to the aid of Ipara and the resultant war dragged from 1862 to 1864, without much enthusiasm or zest on either side. In 1864 a truce was reached and in 1865 a final peace was made.<sup>61</sup>

The years between 1865 and 1877 were relatively peaceful in Yorubaland. The kingdoms of Ife, Ijebu and Egba remained free of any major wars. Most of Ekiti kingdom were also quiet. In 1871, the Ondo were re-settled in their old capital, Ode-Ondo, but although they immediately laid claim to Oke-Igbo, no hostilities ensued. Ibadan spent the period administering what had then become its empire and suppressing revolts within it. Between 1862, when Ibadan was engaged in the Ijaye War, and 1870, Ilesa had taken the advantage of Ibadan's pre-occupation with Ijaye to re-assert its independence and even attempted an expansion of its own authority into Ekiti land by conquering Efon Alaye and Imesi Igboodo between 1862 and 1866. Its invasion of Igbajo in 1867 led to its being sacked in 1870 by the Ibadan army. Henceforth Ibadan maintained its military presence in Ekiti land, dealt firmly with any revolts and even got ready to confront the Nupe rulers in the parts of Yorubaland held by them.<sup>62</sup>

### **The War to End All Wars, 1877–1893**

The 16 years war, otherwise called Ekitiparapo or Kiriji War, was fought against Ibadan by all those towns subject to Ibadan or jealous of its power or afraid of its domination. It was a war of independence for the latter while for Ibadan it was a war



to preserve all the gains made for Yorubaland since 1840, or for some to preserve Ibadan's dominion. It started in July 1877 between Abeokuta and Ibadan. In 1878, the Ekiti, taking advantage of this, revolted and the war continued until 1893. Ibadan's need of a direct route to Lagos for an uninterrupted supply of ammunition to keep its army strong and Abeokuta's and Ijebu's fear of the consequences of such a strength had been a perennial problem since the destruction of Ijaye in 1862. By 1877, Latoosa, the *Aare* of Ibadan appeared to have decided to clear Ibadan's route to Lagos through Abeokuta territory and to start a war he capitalised on the Egba's refusal to allow the Alaafin's gunpowder to pass to Oyo early in 1877. The Ijebu, after an initial vacillation, realised the implication of the conquest of Abeokuta by Ibadan and they therefore joined forces with Abeokuta.

The Ekiti, realising that this war would engage all the energies of Ibadan, took the opportunity to revolt. The revolt started in mid-1878 at Imesi Igbodo with Fabunmi beheading Awopetun, the Ibadan *Ajele*, over the latter's alleged disruption of Fabunmi's annual celebration of *Erinle*. Very quickly all the Ekiti who had been looking for an excuse to revolt were persuaded to join Fabunmi to constitute the Ekitiparapo and war broke out. The Ilorin, who had been contemplating joining the Ibadan against the Egba and Ijebu changed their minds and decided to join the Ekitiparapo instead, seeing in the move an opportunity to fulfill their ambition to dominate the Ekiti country. This alliance had an initial military success in capturing Igbajo, Iresi, Otan and Ada. When however they laid siege to Ikirun, the Ibadan army under Ajayi Ogboriefon came and, in one day, relieved Ikirun and dispersed the whole alliance in what came to be known as Jalumi War. The Ibadan army was therefore recalled and it was thought that the rebellion had been crushed.

## Conclusion

The events that unfolded in Yorubaland at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century was not just the collapse of the Oyo Empire, but a complete breakdown of intra and inter kingdom system of government in Oyo, Ife and Owu kingdoms. These kingdoms occupied a central position in Yorubaland both geographically and politically. At first, the leaders did not quite realise the full impact of what was happening but kept fighting for their individual safety and preferment as if that was all that mattered. In the process, a large part of Yorubaland was lost to foreigners, notably the Fulani. When belatedly in 1826 they realised the destructive consequences of what Johnson called their short sightedness and vaulting ambition, they tried to heal the wounds by summoning a peace meeting aimed at organising a united action against the foreign invaders. Although that meeting failed, the spirit that informed it was kept alive. Ibadan and Ijaye took up the mantle of leadership to defend the integrity of Yorubaland and achieved a measure of success by the middle of the 19th century, by which time the Fulani had been driven out of all the forest areas of Yorubaland. Ibikunle, the *Balogun* of Ibadan summoned a general meeting of Yoruba kingdoms to strengthen the peace so far achieved and build up a greater unity. But his voice of reason was soon drowned by those who had forgotten their recent history. Rivalry again started between Ibadan, Ijaye and Oyo which ultimately destroyed Ijaye, weakened Oyo and scattered the little togetherness built up by Ibadan. When a definitive peace was made in 1886 and the armies disbanded in 1893, divided



Yorubaland fell an easy prey to British Colonial penetration.

However, the Ekitiparapo did not give up. They regrouped and in 1879 started the war again under the leadership of Ogedengbe of Ilesa. The war had a number of interesting features. As we already noted, all the towns being dominated by Ibadan joined against what they regarded as Ibadan oppression. The *Alaafin*, nominally Ibadan overlord, more than secretly supported the alliance against Ibadan because he too was afraid of Ibadan's power and its eventual consequences. The Egba war was suspended and simply petered out. Ife which had reluctantly joined the Ibadan army in 1878, changed sides and declared for the Ekitiparapo in 1882. This led to reprisals being taken by Ibadan against Ife, reprisals which brought out the Ijebu openly to come and fight for Ife against Ibadan. Ibadan's diplomacy however broke Ijebu unity leading to the pro-Ife *Awujale* being dethroned and exiled and Aboki, a pro-Ibadan *Awujale*, being installed.

In spite of the advantages enjoyed by the Ekitiparapo in weapons, the war reached a stalemate by 1882 and though everyone wanted peace, no one was able to arrange one. A powerful editorial by the *Lagos Times* spurred the Yoruba educated elite into action and they united to ask the colonial administration in Lagos to intervene and make peace in Yorubaland. The first attempt in 1882 was stalled on the question of who was to move first. Finally in 1886, peace terms were arranged and signed on 23 September 1886. Five days later, on 28 September the camps in the main theatre of war at Igbajo and Imesi Ile were broken up. However the Ofa camp was not broken up until 1893. By that time the British were well into taking over Yorubaland and incorporating it into Nigeria.

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4. For details of the expansion see R.S. Smith: "The Alaafin in exile" *Journal of African History* Vol. vi. No. 1 1965 pp. 57–88, Johnson S: *The History of the Yoruba* (Lagos C.M.S. 1956) pp. 161–167; Akinjogbin I.A.: "The expansion of Oyo and rise of Dahomey" in *History of West Africa* (eds. J.F. Ade Ajayi and M. Crowder) Longman, 1971 pp. 311 – 313; Akinjogbin I.A.: "Agaja and the Conquest of the Coastal Aja States" in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol. ii No. 4 1964 pp. 545–566; I.A. Akinjogbin: *Dahomey and its Neighbours 1708–1818*. (C.U.P.) 1967. ch. 3; R.C.C. Law *The Oyo Empire* pp.

202-236.

5. Akinjogbin, I.A.: "Towards a Historical Geography of Yorubaland" in *Proceedings of the Conference on Yoruba Civilization* (Eds. Akinjogbin & G.O. Ekemode) (Ife 1976).
6. Akinjogbin, I.A.: *Dahomey and Its Neighbours* pp. 145-146. "The Economic Foundations of the Oyo Empire" in *Topics on Nigerian Economic and Social History* (I.A. Akinjogbin & S. Osoba ed.) (University of Ife Press) Ife-Ife 1980 pp. 35-54.
7. Johnson related an incident in which Oyo manufacturers successfully matched an imported cloth pattern during the reign of Alaafin Agboluaje in mid 1750's. See Johnson S.: *History* p. 179.
8. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 178-181; Akinjogbin I.A: "The Oyo Empire in the Eighteenth Century - A Reassessment" in J.H.S.N. Vol. III, No. 3 Dec. 1966 pp. 449-460; Law R: *The Oyo Empire* pp. 199-201.
9. Examples are Between 1754 and 1774 when Gaha was in control. See Johnson: *History* pp. 178-181.
10. Akinjogbin, I.A and E.A. Ayandele: "Yorubaland up to 1800" in *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Ed. O. Ikime) p. 137.
11. Johnson, S: *History* p. 176
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13. Oguntuyi, Mons. A: *A History of Ado-Ekiti*
14. Oguntuyi, A: *Op. cit.*
15. Olafimihan, J.B.: *Iwe Itan Ofa*: (Abiodun Printing Press) Ibadan 1948. pp. 8-15.
16. Epega, Rev. D. Onadele: *Iwe Itan Ijebu ati Awon Ilu Miran* (Lagos 1934).
17. Botewa means those who come during rebellion; Kotetan-means may the rebellion cease; Otekase means the rebellion has abated; Kale means let everyone carry his cutlass.
18. Adediran A: "The Emergence of the Western Yoruba kingdoms" (University of Ife) Ph.D. 1980: p. 229.
19. Adediran, A: "The Emergence ..." p. 239.
20. Parrinder G: *The Story of Ketu* (2nd Ed. by I.A. Akinjogbin) (University of Ibadan Press 1966) pp. 38-39.
21. Parrinder G: *The Story of Ketu* pp. 41-43; I.A. Akinjogbin - *Dahomey* pp. 172-173
22. Johnson, S.: *History* p. 172
23. Johnson, S.: *History* pp. 178-188
24. Faleti, Adebayo: *Omo Olokun Esin*  
Johnson, S.: *History* p. 214
25. A verse preserved in Yoruba Ijala reads.  
A so aguntan meji mo igbo  
Omo onile tu ikan lo  
Eemo, ki l'ari yi?  
(Two goats are tied in the bush to graze

A prince took one away with impunity  
What an unspeakable injustice?)

26. Johnson, S.: *History* p. 189; Akinjogbin I. A.: *Dahomey* p. 176.
27. Law, R.: *The Oyo Empire* pp. 246–260. Akinjogbin I.A.: *Dahomey* pp. 175–177; Johnson S: *History* pp. 189 – 197.
28. An example was the formation of Ogo Were (translated as The jackels or Young Glories) formed in the Epo (present Osun). Johnson S, *History* p. 197.
29. Johnson, S.: *History* pp. 194–195; Law R: *The Oyo Empire* pp. 251 – 252.
30. Akinjogbin, I.A.: (Ed.): *A History of Ife* (forthcoming) pp. xlv – xv.
31. Johnson, S.: *History* pp. 206–210. Law R.: *The Oyo Empire* 275 suggests 1812 as the date of the first Owu war with Ife.
32. Ajisafe, A.K.: *History of Abeokuta* (Lagos, 1948 pp. 28–32); Johnson S: *History*... pp. 207–210; 223–225.
33. C.M.S. CA.2/049: David Hinderer: "Account of a Journey to Ibadan" 4th June 1851.
34. CA.2/049: Hinderer's Journey to Ijebu - 15th Dec. 1854 to 4th Jan. 1855.
35. Johnson, S: *History* p. 194.
36. Mason: *The Nupe Kingdom* pp. 53 – 79; Law R: *The Oyo Empire* pp. 255–256.
37. Ahmadu, Ibn Abu Bakr (Abu Ikokoro) "Ta'lif akhbar al-gurum min Umara bila Ilorin": dated 24.3.1912; translation by G.B. Martin, S. Johnson: *History* p. 193. The date 1817 is calculated from Abu Ikokoro's Arabic script in which he gave the dates of the various Emirs of Ilorin.
38. Ikokoro, Abu: "History of Ilorin"; Johnson S: *History* p. 198.
39. Ikokoro, Abu: "History of Ilorin" The date is calculated from information contained in this manuscript.
40. Ikokoro, Abu: "History of Ilorin": Johnson: *History* pp. 198, 200. The two accounts slightly differ in details of who took the initiative in the war; obviously there must have been open strained relations in which each party, Afonja and Abdulsalam got ready for the eventual showdown.
41. Johnson, S: *History* p. 203 – 204 Ikokoro Abu : "History of Ilorin"; Again, the accounts in these two works differ in details. An investigation into the processes of Fulani takeover of authority in Ilorin will be fruitful; Law R: *The Oyo Empire* pp. 258–260.
42. Johnson, S: *History*
43. Law, R.: *The Oyo Empire* pp. 284 – 291; Johnson, S, *History* pp. 200–202, pp. 218–219
44. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 197–222 gives many instances of these changing alliances, quarrels among the Yoruba leaders and the consummate political game of the Fulani rulers of Ilorin. Law R.: *The Oyo Empire* pp. 284–299.
45. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 238–242; pp. 247–248. Mabogunje A.L. Lloyd P.S. and Awe B: *The City of Ibadan* (C.U.P.) 1967, pp. 11–25.
46. Johnson, S.: *History* p. 236.
47. Akintoye, S.A.: *Revolution and Power Politics*: p. 36.
48. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 274–283.
49. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 285–289
50. Akintoye, S.A.: *Revolution & Power Politics* pp. 35 – 36.

40. Ikokoro, Abu: "History of Ilorin": Johnson: *History* pp. 198, 200. The two accounts slightly differ in details of who took the initiative in the war; obviously there must have been open strained relations in which each party, Afonja and Abdulsalam got ready for the eventual showdown.
41. Johnson, S: *History* p. 203 – 204 Ikokoro Abu: "History of Ilorin"; Again, the accounts in these two works differ in details. An investigation into the processes of Fulani takeover of authority in Ilorin will be fruitful; Law R: *The Oyo Empire* pp. 258–260.
42. Johnson, S: *History*
43. Law, R.: *The Oyo Empire* pp. 284 – 291; Johnson, S, *History* pp. 200–202, pp. 218–219
44. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 197–222 gives many instances of these changing alliances, quarrels among the Yoruba leaders and the consummate political game of the Fulani rulers of Ilorin. Law R.: *The Oyo Empire* pp. 284–299.
45. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 238–242; pp. 247–248. Mabogunje A.L. Lloyd P.S. and Awe B: *The City of Ibadan* (C.U.P.) 1967, pp. 11–25.
46. Johnson, S.: *History* p. 236.
47. Akintoye, S.A.: *Revolution and Power Politics*: p. 36.
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50. Akintoye, S.A.: *Revolution & Power Politics* pp. 35 – 36.
51. Akinjogbin, I.A.: *Dahomey* ch. 3; "Agaja and the Conquest of the Coastal Aja States" in *JHSN* Vol. II No. 4 1964 pp. 545–566.
52. Akinjogbin, I.A.: "Dahomey and Yoruba in the Nineteenth Century" in *Africa in the Nineteenth Century* (Ed. by Anene and Brown) Nelson 1966 pp. 255–269.
53. Akintoye S.A: *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland* (Ibadan) Longman 1971; Awe, B. "The Rise of Ibadan Empire" D. Phil. Oxford 1964.
54. Akinjogbin, I.A.: "The outlying towns of Ife" ch. 11 in *A History of Ife* (Ed. I.A. Akinjogbin) forthcoming.
55. "Statement of the Ife chiefs to the Peace Commissioners in May 1886, in *Parliamentary Papers: Accounts and papers* Feb. 1887.
56. Akintoye, S.A.: *Revolution and Power Politics* pp. 35–36.
57. Ade Ajayi, J.F., and Smith R.: *Yoruba Warfare* pp. 73 – 75.
58. Ade Ajayi, J. F.; and Smith R.: *Yoruba Warfare* pp. 76–85.
59. Johnson S.: *History* pp. 331–336.
60. Ade Ajayi, J.F.; and Smith R.: *Yoruba Warfare* pp. 76– 113.
61. Ade Ajayi, J.F.; and Smith R.: *Yoruba Warfare* pp. 114–172.
62. Akintoye, S.A.: *Revolution and Power Politics* pp. 56 – 65.
63. The whole of this section is a precis of Akintoye, S.A: *Revolution and Power Politics* ch. 4.



## Chapter Four

# Warfare and Change in Ondo, c. 1830–1900

Olasiji Oshin

### Introduction

In spite of the ever-growing literature on 19th century Yorubaland, some Yoruba groups have continued to elude the attention of historians. One of such groups is the Ondo people of the modern Ondo State of Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> This chapter examines the effects of the 19th century wars on the Ondo people with particular reference to political and socio-economic developments in the Ondo kingdom during and after the reign of Oba Arilekolasi.

The early 19th century saw the advent of Oba Arilekolasi as the *Osemawe* of Ondo. His reign was 'destined' to leave a profound impact on the socio-political development of the people. Before his accession, the Ondo kingdom was at the back-water of Yoruba power politics. Situated in the thickly forested areas of eastern Yorubaland, the Ondo, it seems, were removed from the political and cultural influences of Old Oyo and from the direct pressure of population movements which followed the collapse of Oyo Empire.<sup>2</sup> Whereas the Ekiti, Akoko, Ijesa and the Igbomina shared the common experience of armed pressure from their powerful neighbours of Owo, Benin and Oyo, the Ondo did not experience similar direct pressure. In 19th century, Owo and Akure came directly under the Benin Empire, and had 'pockets' of Edo population amongst them, but there is no evidence that Benin exercised such political control over Ondo.<sup>3</sup>

Evidence of Ondo contact with Benin dates back to the 16th century when a Benin party made incursions into Ondo territory and probably imposed a new ruler on the people.<sup>4</sup> It would appear that between the 16th century and the 19th century, the Ondo enjoyed a long period of peace and did not develop along military lines. Except for occasional skirmishes with her Ikale neighbours and the early wars of invasion into the Ondo kingdom, the Ondo did not engage in major wars and had no traditions of warfare. Hence, they had no standing army or professional soldiers. It is ironical however, that whereas the Ondo were not known to have fought major wars, the socio-political systems which emerged in Ondo with the advent of the *Osemawe* dynasty in the 16th century and the transformations which took place in the 19th century, were occasioned by war conditions.

### Ondo in the Pre-19th Century Era

Until the advent of Oba Arilekolasi, peace and stability in Ondo was ensured by a political system based on a network of chieftaincy titles with intricate traditions of checks and balances. The *Osemawe*, at the apex of the socio-political hierarchy shared political powers with the chiefs who functioned at different levels of government. There were three grades of title-holders, namely, the *Iwarefa*, the *Ekule* and the *Elegbe* chiefs.

The *Iwarefa*, the highest grade, included the *Osemawe*, who in session with the other chiefs was no more than a *primus inter pares*. Although he presided at their meetings and took part in the proceedings, the *Osemawe's* 'voice' was never heard by the people. Outside the *Ugha* (Council Chamber), the *Osemawe* assumed divine character, towering above the *Iwarefa* chiefs. He was, in the words of Oyin Ogunba, 'the magnificent living symbol of the community and a pivot of the life and history of his people'.<sup>5</sup>

The three-tier chieftaincy system, was created by Airo in the 16th century. The first *Iwarefa* chiefs were warriors who led his army to invade Ondo country.<sup>6</sup> Led by Jomunla, Airo's horde had successfully routed all the opposing forces. He consequently embarked upon structural re-arrangements of the political system.<sup>7</sup>

Hitherto, the country was governed by the Oba (who according to tradition were women<sup>8</sup>), and a Council of Elders. The Elders supervised the younger people who in their age-sets, performed military and civil functions as occasions arose. The leaders of the age-sets (Egbe or Otu) were known as *Elegbe*.

By the beginning of the 19th century, there were 15 senior *Elegbe* taking charge of the 15 quarters into which Ode-Ondo was divided. Airo not only created a new Council (the *Eghare* or *Iwarefa*) composed of his military commanders, but also created a new class of title-holders, the *Ekule*, who began to perform intermediate roles between the *Osemawe* and the *Iwarefa* on one hand, and the *Elegbe* on the other.<sup>9</sup>

The *Elegbe* and their different *Egbe* (age-sets) were thus subjected to the control of new masters. By the turn of the 19th century, real power and influence had been vested in the five *Iwarefa* chiefs who directed the affairs of the town in the name of the *Osemawe*. The chiefs were *Lisa*, *Jomu*, *Odunwo*, *Sasere*, and *Adaja* in that order of seniority. The most powerful of the *Iwarefa* chiefs was the *Lisa*, who as chief executive of the state, wielded immense powers and influence. *Lisa's* influence by the late 19th century was such that he was generally regarded as *Oba-Ode* (king of the capital<sup>10</sup>) while the *Osemawe* was seen as the king of the entire kingdom. The *Lisa* acted as Regent during an interregnum, and held sway between the death of an *Osemawe* and the accession of his successor. Like the other *Iwarefa*, he was in charge of a quarter in the capital and supervised a group of outlying towns and villages.<sup>11</sup>

The *Ekule* and the *Elegbe* also performed important social and political roles in the administration of the kingdom. They maintained the balance between the *Iwarefa* council and the people. While the *Iwarefa* chiefs may easily be identified with the *Osemawe*, the *Ekule* and especially the *Elegbe* were more representative of the people's interests, and could tilt the balance of power against the *Iwarefa* chiefs or the *Osemawe*, forcing any of them out of office.<sup>12</sup> Such was the prevailing situation until the 1830s and the events which characterised the reign of *Oba Arilekolasi*.

### Slavery Institution in the 19th Century Ondo:

In order to place *Osemawe Arilekolasi's* reign in its proper historical context and to appreciate the role played by his slaves in the course of his reign, it is necessary to discuss the role of the servile class in 19th century Ondo society.

The servile class fell into various categories. These included the slave executives, embracing the palace official, foster parents to royal children, and traders of the Oba and the wealthy. Below these were slaves working on the farms of their masters and those who performed menial services.<sup>13</sup> As opposed to slavery in the New World in

which the slave, as a member of the lowest social class, was sentenced to a life of servitude, slavery in the Ondo context, as in other parts of Yorubaland, was an institution integrated in a social system in which social division was largely vertical rather than horizontal. A slave was only a slave to his master and he could, in fact, be a master to some freemen.

Essentially therefore, the slaves were members of their masters household. They were not sold except for serious offences. They had their own plots of land and rights to a proportion of the fruits of their labour; they could marry, and their children had rights of inheritance; when born of one free parent the children often acquired a new status. Such individuals could rise to positions of great trust including that of a chief. Consequently, the slaves generally identified themselves with the lot of their masters, and would stop at nothing in defence of what they considered the interest of their master. As Oroge points out, "... the so called slaves generally discharged their duties with apparent efficiency and with the minimum of their supervision or compulsion".<sup>14</sup> In this way, the servile class, as members of their masters' household, shared in their masters' fortunes and misfortunes.

The slaves consequently occupied a crucial position in the economic enterprise of their masters. It was economically expedient to possess large domestic slaves who could be called upon not only to engage in trade but also to provide head portage for the commodities. Essentially, the slaves and their Ondo masters served as middlemen for the trade between the coast and the more interior countries of Ijesa and Ekiti. The main articles of commerce were clothes, coral beads, jugs, salt, tobacco, guns and gunpowder as well as rum obtained partly from Lagos through Ijebu and partly from the Ijo through the coast of Benin. In turn, the Ondo sold ivory, sheep, goats, country clothes and slaves brought from the Ijesa and Ekiti countries to the coastal traders. Thus domestic slavery and commercial enterprise were closely bound together. Slaves were made to work not only as farmers, but also as traders as well as soldiers to protect their masters' economic interests to which their lot was linked. The slaves were kept at strategic locations in the kingdom and outside of it for purposes of exploiting the thriving commerce. In the 1870's for instance *Lisa* Edun placed some of his slaves at Ode-Aye an entrepot of Ondo where they traded in salt with the Ijo from Igbo-Bini.<sup>15</sup> It is also said that *Oba* Arilekolasi kept some of his slaves at Iperindo before moving them to Oke-Igbo on ascending the Ondo throne.<sup>16</sup>

As if built to tap trade coming from all directions, Ode-Ondo, the capital, had five main gates and roads linking the town with neighbouring kingdoms. These roads were used for commercial and diplomatic purposes. Each road was supervised and defended by an *Iwarefa* chief who also collected tolls from traders using the road. These were Oke-Lisa on Ooni road linking Ondo with Ile-Ife; the Odotu road which linked the capital with Ijebu traders; while Oke-Odunwo on Agbabu road connected Ondo with the Ijo and the port of Agbabu. Agbabu became the main commercial entrepot for Ondo, Ijo and Benin traders. Going through Ikaleland and Mahin, Ondo traders went as far afield as Lagos. In 1879, Rev. Phillips reported in one of his quarterly journals that:

The Ijebu people are not content with closing their (door) against missionaries, but they are trying to induce other tribes to do so. In July, their king sent some messengers to the Ondo authorities with a



view to renew the commerce which had existed between the Ijebu and Ondo people, but which had been discontinued in consequence of the late wars which desolated the Ondo country.<sup>17</sup>

Oke-Lisa was manned by Lisa, and Oke-Odunwo by Odunwo while Sasere collected tolls from traders doing business with the Ijebu. Jomu supervised trade with Benin along Odojomu, While Adaja at Oke-Dibo took charge of Akure and Ijesa roads.<sup>18</sup> It is hardly surprising therefore that some of the gateways became known by the title of the *Iwarefa* chiefs manning them.

### Advent of Oba Arilekolasi

Oba Arilekolasi ascended the Ondo throne early in 19th century, perhaps in the second decade of the century. Literature backed by oral traditions, portray him as a wealthy despot who allowed his wealth and commercial interests to supersede his obligations as a ruler. Rev. J. A. Leigh had written:

On his accession to the throne, he set aside all his councillors, acting independently of their advice, and making his will a law... the king's slaves often abused the privileges they had to cheat the people. They often beat them (the Ondo people) dispossessed them of their property, and robbed them of their cattle... The king himself was guilty of extortions and of taking the wives of his subjects.... His own wickedness together with the violence suffered at the hands of his favourites and slaves made his subject unanimously reject him as their king.<sup>19</sup>

Rev. Charles Phillips also wrote in 1879 in the following terms:

His great wealth and power excited the jealousy and apprehension of his people, and they tried to find occasion to make insurrection against him.<sup>20</sup>

The Osemawe's wealth has been traced partly to inheritance from his parents, and partly to his dealings in the slave trade. For instance, Bada and Leigh stated that he inherited 200 slaves from his father and 180 from his mother. These figures have given rise to the maxim, *O K'osan lu' gba* meaning 'he added a hundred and eighty to two hundred,' an expression commonly used to describe acts of avarice and cupidity.<sup>21</sup> Although slave holding was a major indicator of wealth in the Ondo society of the 18th and early 19th centuries, the ownership of as many as 380 slaves was an unusual phenomenon; even so, the more slaves one possessed the more likely he was able to wield political and economic powers.

Tradition has it that before his accession to the throne, Arilekolasi had sojourned at Ile-Ife where he came into handsome property. It is said that his mother hailed from Ifewara.<sup>22</sup> The fact that he inherited some 380 slaves from his parents seems to suggest that they were big time traders probably dealing in slaves. It is not surprising then that Arilekolasi's outpost on ascending the throne was Oke-Igbo on Ooni road.

Arilekolasi's problem on the throne can be traced to his inability to divorce his role as *Osemawe* from that of a commercial magnate; nor was he able to free himself from the influence of his erstwhile associates outside the Ondo kingdom. According to tradition, trouble started shortly after his accession to the throne. Instead of turning to his chiefs for advice and political guidance, the Oba preferred the advice of his foreign associates particularly, the advice of one Ajibike, an Ifa priest who had accompanied



him to Ondo from Ile-Ife. Ajibike had withdrawn to Oke-Igbo in the face of mounting opposition to what was seen as his corrupting influence on the *Osemawe*. There, he supervised the *Oba's* slaves in their commercial and farming activities. The slaves on their part engaged in criminal acts, such as kidnapping, raiding and looting of peoples' farms and properties.

It seems, therefore, that Arilekolasi's reign was sustained largely by stranger elements and his slaves at Ondo, and by powers outside the kingdom. For instance, *Ooni* Abeweila of Ife, as Leigh put it: '... used to send him congratulation every year accompanied with presents borne to him by a great number of his slaves.'<sup>23</sup> The *Ooni's* slaves became notorious for their lawless and disorderly activities during such visits. According to Leigh, "During the temporary stay of those slaves in the country near Odosida, the violence perpetrated by them was horrible"<sup>24</sup> *Ooni* Abeweila's interest in the Ondo country may be explained in terms of developments at Ife in the 1830s.<sup>25</sup> One of the difficult Ife chiefs during the reign of *Ooni* Abeweila was a Prince Derin Ologbenla.<sup>26</sup> Abeweila's pre-occupation was to get rid of him.

At Ondo, opposition to the autocratic rule of *Oba* Arilekolasi was initiated by two dominant groups; the *Iwarefa* chiefs and the wealthy class. The *Iwarefa*, were not only 'kingmakers', they could become the 'king-breakers' by using their position to turn the people against the *Osemawe*. The opposition by the wealthy was led by Ajakaye, Timawo, and Koyemi.<sup>27</sup> Ajakaye the richest and most powerful of the three, became the target of the *Oba's* intrigue. The *Osemawe* saw the rich not only as a danger to his reign—since they could arouse the people against him—but also as rivals in commercial enterprise. It seems that Ajakaye was such a formidable rival that the *Oba* was too glad to eliminate him. Ajakaye was killed by the *Osemawe's* slaves<sup>28</sup> Koyemi also died under mysterious circumstances. He is said to have been killed by his own slaves. It would appear that a systematic plan to eliminate the *Oba's* opponents and critics was being executed.

The man who was to lead the people in their revolt against Arilekolasi was Prince Totomolejoye. He ascended the throne after Arilekolasi's suicide. He was the rallying point for the chiefs who saw him as an alternative to *Osemawe*. Records and traditions are silent as regards the immediate events that precipitated the peoples' rebellion. However, as Phillips' records show "when the king saw that disaffection to him was becoming general among the people, he began to build a walled town in his farm, hoping to retreat to that place as soon as he would have found it unsafe to remain within the capital. Before he could make his escape (sic) he was anticipated and overpowered by the people who forced him to kill himself."<sup>29</sup>

### Oke-Igbo in Ondo-Ife Politics

The death of Arilekolasi, not only gave *Ooni* Abeweila the opportunity he needed to get rid of Derin Ologbenla, it also gave the Ife people an opportunity to raid and plunder the Ondo country. Reacting to the death of his friend, Ajibike at Oke-Igbo, and Kulajolu led the slaves of Arilekolasi to unleash a reign of terror upon the Ondo people by engaging in indiscriminate and incessant raids of their farms and town. Tradition had it that the *Oba* sent his soldiers after the marauders but they were repelled.<sup>30</sup> As a consequence, Totomolejoye took poison and died.

But the worst was yet to come. His successor, Osungbadelola had an onerous task dealing with the raiders. Ajibike had sent to *Ooni* Abeweila requesting for fortification at Oke-Igbo. Derin and his men were quickly despatched. Before he left for Oke-Igbo, Derin who was recalled from a military campaign at Isorogi in Ijesa territory sent two spies, Sowo and Asunganga, to Oke-Igbo to assess the situation and the possible gains to him and his men.<sup>31</sup> Thus about 1842, the Ife forces in collaboration with Ajibike and the slaves of Arilekolasi who were familiar with the Ondo country launched an attack on Ondo.

This marked the beginning of the 30 years war that left a devastating effect on the Ondo. Armed with muskets which they had acquired from the European traders through their Ijebu allies, the Ife had no difficulty over-running the Ondo. In addition to their newly acquired fire-power, the Ife also had in their ranks Oyo mercenaries. The Ondo people and their new *Oba* Osemawe Osungbadelola fled their capital into the outlying villages where they regrouped and fought back. Though they succeeded in stopping the enemies from advancing further in their territory, they were unable to dislodge them from Oke-Igbo or to re-occupy their main town.<sup>32</sup> The war dragged on inconclusively for about 30 years terminating in 1870 with the advent of the British.

As the war dragged on, however, more warriors from Ile-Ife joined their kith and kin at Oke-Igbo. The influx of Ife elements into Oke-Igbo became pronounced in the 1850s when Modakeke sacked Ife. Many more Ife took refuge at Oke-Igbo. The Ondo campaign provided for them, not only an escape from the pressures of the Oyo at Modakeke, but also, an opportunity to enrich themselves as they captured slaves and looted properties.

To Derin in particular, it was an opportunity to build for himself a strong political and economic base towards the realisation of his ultimate ambition of becoming the *Ooni* of Ife. Thus he remained at Oke-Igbo and carried his raids beyond the capital to the outlying towns and villages. In 1869, when an emissary of Governor Glover, Awobikun came to explore the possibility of opening a new route through Ondo to Ibadan, he found that little bands of Ondo men were still maintaining a guerilla-type war against the Ife foothold in their kingdom. Ode-Ondo, the capital, and many of the southern Ondo towns, including Araromi-Obu, Morun, Igbindo and Odigbo were in ruins.<sup>33</sup> Derin's position was further enhanced in the declining years of the Yoruba wars. These wars—Ijaye, Kiriji and Ife-Modakeke, have been well documented.<sup>34</sup> In an effort to end the Yoruba civil wars, the *Alaafin* in 1818 turned to Derin to restore peace in Yorubaland.<sup>35</sup>

Two factors contributed to the enhanced position of Derin during the declining years of the Yoruba civil wars. First, in the late 1860s Captain Glover, the administrator of the British Colony of Lagos, needed an alternative route to the interior following the closure of the Egba and Ijebu routes to the Lagos traders consequent upon the dispute between the Egba and Ijebu on one hand, and the Lagos Government on the other. The new route passed through Mahin, Ikale, Ondo and Oke-Igbo to Ile-Ife, and Ibadan. Since Derin and his men controlled the Ife-Ondo road, both the Ibadan and the Ekitiparapo and their allies constantly curried his favour. Secondly, as the *Ooni* elect of Ife he was regarded as the spiritual head of the whole Yoruba. He thus enjoyed the cooperation of all sides as he intervened in the various attempts to bring peace to the Yoruba country.

Derin's hope of returning to Ile-Ife was completely shattered in 1882 when Ile-Ife

was destroyed by the Ibadan and Modakeke.<sup>36</sup> This also sealed the fate of the Ife elements who had flocked to him at Oke-Igbo and consequently, the character of the Oke-Igbo population.

The colonisation of Oke-Igbo by the Ife during the war years made Oke-Igbo the bone of contention between the Ondo and the Ife, during the intervention of the Lagos Government. The Ondo, claiming ownership of Oke-Igbo, demanded that the Ife elements should return to their home at Ile-Ife. But as the situation at Ile-Ife was not conducive to Derin's return, he and his sympathisers remained at Oke-Igbo.

As indicated earlier, when in 1869 Awobikun was sent to explore the Ondo road, he found the country unsafe for travellers and traders. Captain Glover therefore sent Awobikun and Obayomi in 1871 to prepare grounds for the settlement of the conflicts. In 1872, Roger Goldworthy, the District Magistrate and Acting Collector of customs for the Lagos Colony succeeded in getting the belligerent parties to agree to cessation of hostilities, thus paving the way for Ode-Ondo to be re-occupied.

In that year, *Oba* Jimkun, the third *Osemawe* in exile, led the Ondo people back to their capital. At the negotiations, Goldworthy informed the Ondo and the Ife of the Government's intention to open up the country to peaceful commerce with Lagos. He warned the people to desist from disturbing travellers and traders from Lagos who would be plying the road.<sup>37</sup> On their part the Ondo demanded the removal of the Ife from Oke-Igbo, and the return of the land to Ondo. On this, Goldworthy promised to brief the Lt. Governor in Lagos. Before Goldworthy returned to Lagos, the Lt. Governor, Sir Glover, had been recalled. With Glover's recall, the Ife not only objected to leaving Oke-Igbo, but also repudiated the agreement earlier made with Goldworthy on runaway slaves.<sup>38</sup> Governor Hennessy and Mr. Fowler, the Acting Administrator of Lagos had a completely different attitude to the question of the Ondo road. Opposed to Glover's policies, Hennessy and Fowler reversed the former's policy towards the Ondo road, choosing to conciliate the Egba and the Ijebu.<sup>39</sup>

In December, 1880, the *Osemawe*, chiefs and people of Ondo wrote a petition to the Lt. Governor in Lagos in regard to the 1872 agreement with the Ife under the supervision of Goldworthy. They complained that the Ife had not kept their side of the agreements. Instead of 12 heads of cowries agreed upon, the Ife had demanded cash payments of 70 to 162 heads before a slave could be restored to his master. Furthermore, when Chief Lisa died in Ondo, the Ife had raided his slaves. The Ondo therefore renewed their earlier demand that Derin Ologbenla and his men should vacate Oke-Igbo.<sup>40</sup> It goes without saying that while the end to hostilities was marked by the return of the Ondo to their capital in the 1870s, the problem of the Ife colonies at Oke-Igbo persisted until the early 20th century.

The return of peace to the Ondo country was followed in 1875 by the establishment of missionary stations at Ode-Ondo and Itebu on the Ilaje creeks by the Church Missionary Society, C.M.S. This paved the way for the influx of Lagos traders who were anxious to take advantage of the new road. Thus, with the intervention of the Lagos Government, the situation was no longer the same. The missionaries, especially Rev. Charles Phillips, began to mediate between the Ondo and the Ife at Oke-Igbo. They also worked in collaboration with the government, and influenced the people towards implementing governments policies. In turn, the missionaries sought government's assistance in the eradication of 'unchristian' practices.



One of such practices was domestic slavery and the slave trade. In 1880, Consul Hewett visited Ondo to advise the peoples of Ondo and Oke-Igbo on this subject. He explained to them that slavery and slave trade was against the British government's policy, and encouraged them to divert their energies into the production of palm-oil, palm kernels and cotton which the British would buy from them. Derin had responded that:

If the people could find profitable trade in the produce of the field they would no longer go to war to catch slaves, and that slave-trade would be discouraged.<sup>41</sup>

Thus to Derin and his lieutenants, slave-raiding and slave trade would continue until an equally profitable substitute was found. Consul Hewett concluded his visit to Ondo country by signing a treaty with the people abolishing human sacrifice, slavery and slave trade in the areas:

After the treaty, the Ondo persisted in their demand that Derin should give up Oke-Igbo. They would not comply with the substance of the treaty until their demands were met. In January 1881, Rev. C. Phillips expressed his fears as to the possible repudiation, by the Ondo of the treaty in regard to seasonal sacrifice. It was becoming obvious to him that the Ondo would seize any opportunity to press their demands home on the Ife at Oke-Igbo.<sup>42</sup> One of such opportunities was the *Oramfe* festival that was fast approaching. The *Oramfe*, a big festival, was generally associated with slaves and human sacrifice. The Ondo had threatened that if the Oke-Igbo matter was not settled, they would not be bound to make good their earlier promise on seasonal sacrifice. Rev. Phillips therefore met Derin and prevailed on him to agree to leave Oke-Igbo. Phillips had written:

Chief Aderin had agreed to give up Oke-Igbo to the Ondo if River Oni be opened so that there be direct trading communication from the Ife country to Lagos.<sup>43</sup>

Hence, Rev. Phillips invited the attention of the Lagos Government to the benefits of opening up the Oni river which in his words, 'would help the development of the resources of these countries...' But the Lagos Government whose pre-occupation at the time, was the Ekitiparapo/Ibadan War, did not consider Rev. Phillips' suggestions.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the Ekitiparapo/Ibadan war arrested the attention of all. It offered the Ondo the opportunity of reviving their economy from the ruins of the 30 year war as the Ibadan and the Ekitiparapo turned their attention to the Ondo road. They began to make special efforts to maintain the goodwill of the Ondo. They sent rich presents to the Ondo chiefs. In 1887, for instance, the Ekitiparapo leaders sent such present praying Ondo authorities to keep the road open to their traders.<sup>45</sup> The Ondo road became the main channel of trade between the Ekiti and the Lagos traders. The Ekiti brought from the interior such products as palm oil, palm kernel and home spun clothes in exchange for such articles as salt, European cloths, spirits, tobacco, cowries and coral beads from the coast. Taking advantage of the road, the Ondo participated actively in the import-export trade. They competed with some success with Lagos traders in retailing the imported goods in Ekiti, Ijesa and Ilorin countries. Indeed, the leading Ondo traders formed an association of their own – an association rightly described as 'a sort of local chamber of commerce'.<sup>46</sup> In this way, Ode-Ondo became a major commercial entrepot and the busiest town in the eastern Yoruba country.

Anxious to improve commerce and the revenue of Lagos as well as to secure the interior for the British, the Lagos Government in 1888 signed treaties of commerce and friendship with various Yoruba Obas, chiefs and peoples including the Ondo.<sup>47</sup> Actually by the 1880s the Ondo had become sufficiently strong to withstand the threat of the Ife at Oke-Igbo. They had become a major power whose opinions were respected.

### Socio-political Changes in Ondo

Meanwhile, the 30 years war had left its permanent imprint on the socio-political life of the Ondo people. Apart from population dislocation, the war had led to socio-political disorder and economic disruptions. In exile, the *Osemawe* and his chiefs had been on the move. On three occasions, 'the throne' shifted its seats, while three *Osemawe*: Osungbadelola, Oyibikiti, Fadunjoye reigned and died in exile.<sup>48</sup> The people were led back from exile by the fourth *Osemawe*, Oba Jimkun. As one *Osemawe* succeeded the other in the course of the war, the *Iwarefa*'s position was increasingly strengthened. They took charge of the administration, and supervised military operations against the enemy. Actual military operations were directed by Ayadi, who was the leader of the war boys, fighting according to their different *Egbe* groups.

There can be no doubt that the people were able to evolve an efficient organisation which sustained them throughout the period of the war. Men were no longer recognised by their quarters or family compounds, but by their *Egbe* and the *Elegbe* in charge of their group. In the circumstance, title-taking was dictated by skill and the ability of the individual to rally followers to meet war emergency situations. It could be argued therefore that the open character of the present three-tier chieftaincy system at Ondo, if not entirely traceable to this period, was greatly reinforced by the events of the war years.<sup>49</sup> Not only was title-taking dictated by skill and the ability to perform, the system of promoting a junior title-holder to a higher title might also have its origin in the war years. Though the war strategies and the general organisation of the people remain a subject for further research, it is reasonable to say that the various *Egbe* had fought the war either by taking their turn on the battle fields, or by an arrangement in which some of them were permanently assigned to fighting, thereby acquiring skill and experience in war tactics. In that case, other groups of *Egbe* were engaged in the provision of food and other supplies to the warriors, while the women and their children addressed themselves to meeting the economic needs of their men folk.

By the 1870s when they returned to their capital, there emerged a significant change in the social-political arrangements of the town. Instead of returning to traditional wards and family quarters, the returnees clustered around their erstwhile leaders in houses which they built for such leaders. Hence, by the late 19th century, more than half of the houses at Ode-Ondo were title-houses occupied by the chiefs and their followers.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, the title-houses of the *Iwarefa* chiefs were situated at the five main gates of the roads linking the capital with outlying towns and the neighbouring kingdoms. Such houses were so large that more than 500 people inhabited them at a time.<sup>51</sup> Locating their quarters near the gates, the *Iwarefa* chiefs were able to exercise effective administrative control over the social and economic activities of the people at the capital and the outlying towns. In this way, a new socio-political system emerged. Titles, which before the war were reserved for certain lineages, became open

to citizens, who won such titles by reason of their contributions to the progress and welfare of the people. Thus, merit rather than birth, became the chief consideration for title-taking. By the same token, junior chiefs who showed promise got titles. Consequently a man did not take an *Iwarefa* or an *Ekule* title unless he was a holder of a Junior title. In other words a man could not aspire to the status of an *Iwarefa*, unless he was an *Ekule* chief nor could he take an *Ekule* title without serving as an *Elegbe*.

Thus, the advent of Oba Arilekolasi in the first decades of the 19th century marked a significant turning point in the history of the Ondo people. His reign, very largely, reflected the state of flux in which the whole of Yorubaland was during the century. Not only did his advent set in motion a process which completely disrupted the traditional socio-political system, it also, in its consequences drew the Ondo kingdom from isolation into the mainstream of the Yoruba power politics. For about 30 years the people were drawn into a war which left their country in ruins, and created situations that brought about changes in the peoples' social relationships, the chieftaincy system and the process of title-taking.

Meanwhile, the Ife at Oke-Igbo had continued to consolidate their position, and by the close of the 19th century, it had become impossible to ask them to leave. They had settled down to agriculture and commerce. In the settlement effected by the colonial government early in the 20th century, a compromise agreement was reached.<sup>32</sup> The Ife were to remain at Oke-Igbo under the suzerainty of the Osemawe of Ondo; while the Oni River became the boundary of Ife territory and the Ondo country.

## Notes and References

1. The need for scholarly historical and ethnological data on the eastern Yoruba peoples has been emphasised. See. Akinjogbin I.A and Ekemode (eds.) *Proceedings of the Conference on Yoruba Civilisation* (Mimeographed, Ife, 1976).
2. For details as regards the extent of Old Oyo influence, See Atanda J.A, *The New Oyo Empire* (London, 1973) p. 5; Akinjogbin I.A, 'The Prelude to the Yoruba Civil Wars of the 19th century' *ODU* Vol.1, No.2, January, 1965.
3. Professor Akintoye seeks to explain Ondo's seeming isolation from her other Yoruba kingdoms in terms of "hills, thick forests and big streams" which separated Ondo from the Ekiti and the Ijesa. Akintoye S.A, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840–1893*. (London, 1971) p. 25.
4. See for instance, Egharevba J.U, *A Short History of Benin* (Ibadan, 1960). Egharevba traces the origin of the *Osemawe* to Benin. This is reinforced by sources which ascribe the movement of the Oba's palace from Erinketa to its present site, in the 16th century. See Togbese S.I. 'Palace Organisation in Ondo', B.A. *Original Essay*, 1976, University of Ife: Philip Diary Book 1/2/3 National Archives, Ibadan and S.O. Bada, *Iwe Itan Ondo* (Ondo) 1940.
5. Ogunba O, 'Ceremonies' in Biobaku S.O. (ed.)
6. Airo was the first male ruler of Ondo. Ondo tradition traces his origin to Ile-Ife. He is said to have been elected by the chiefs to replace his mother, Queen Pupupu, who was removed on account of paying more attention to her poultry at the



expense of the state. As shown above, other interpretations point to Benin as the likely origin of Airo: See also V.O. Oshin, "Ondo in the 19th century Power Politics of Yorubaland" *M.A. Thesis*, Ibadan, 1980 for a detailed analysis of the process of socio-political formations in Ondo from the earliest times.

7. *Ibid.* cf. Togbese S.I., *op. cit.*
8. The era of women rulers in Ondo is still remembered during the installation of a new *Osemawe*. The *L'obun* who is the head of a class of female chiefs corresponding in ranks to the *Iwarefa*, performs the final rites preceding the crowning of the new Oba. She literally leads the new *Osemawe* by hand to the spot where the *Osemawe* is crowned. The *L'obun* and her chiefs have responsibility for markets in the kingdom. She, in council of her chiefs, regulates the commercial activities of the women. Her purely economic role is reflected in her title *L'obun* which in Ondo dialect means Owner of market, *Obun* being market.
9. Oshin, *Ibid.* Chapter 1.
10. Chief Akilapa, the Bajulaye of Ondo: Oral interview 21/2/80.
11. CSO.26/4 'Intelligence Report On Ondo District, 1935' *N.A.I.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. For details on the place of the servile class in the 19th century Yorubaland, see Oroge E.A., 'The Institution of Slavery in Yorubaland with particular reference to the 19th Century' *Ph.D. Thesis*, Birmingham, 1971 pp. 2-3.
14. *Ibid.*
15. C.M.S. CA.2/098 Charles Young, Short Journal for the latter part of 1873.
16. Chief Akilapa: Oral Interview. The importance of Iperindo as a nodal point on the south-eastern trade route has been highlighted in a recent work by Peel J.D. According to him, the Iperindo-Ondo route seems to have eclipsed the south-eastern route. See Peel J.D., *Ijeshas and Nigerians - The Incorporation of a Yoruba Kingdom, 1890-1970* (African Studies Series 39) Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 36.
17. Phillips' Papers 1/2/2 *N.A.I.*
18. C.S.O. 264 A.F. Bridges, Intelligence Report on Ondo District, 1935' File No. 30172 *N.A.I.*
19. Leigh, J.A.: History of Ondo, 1917 p. 49.
20. Phillips' Papers 1/2/3 *N.I.*
21. Chief Jerome Ojo: Oral Interview 20/5/80.
22. Chief Akilapa Oral Interview.
23. Leigh *op. cit.* p. 57
24. *Ibid.*
25. Akinjogbin I.A: *The Cradle of Race; Ife from earliest times to 1980*. (Sunray publications. PortHarcourt 1994).
26. See Adediran Biodun "Derin Ologbenla, the *Ooni*-elect of Ife' in this volume.

27. Bada S.O: *Op. cit.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. Phillips' letter and Diary Book 1/1/1. *N.A.I.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. Chief G.O. Ojo Oral Interview Oke-Igbo 20/5/80.
32. Akintoye, *Revolution* p. 79
33. Akintoye, 'The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, 1870–1895' *J.A.H.* Vol. 8 No. 4 1969 p. 582.
34. See for example, Awe, B.: 'The Rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power in the 19th century' *D. Phil. Thesis* (Oxford 1964); Akintoye, S.A.: *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840–1893* (London 1971); and . Ajayi J.F.A and Smith R.S: *Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century* (Cambridge 1964).
35. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power* p. 163
36. *Ibid.* p. 122.
37. *Ibid.*
38. During the war many slaves had left their masters and joined the opposite side. In the agreement signed, the parties had conceded that slaves who had joined either side from their original masters should be returned on payment of 12 heads of cowries by such masters to the captor for his trouble, and two heads of it was to be given to the person who offered information as to the whereabouts of such slaves. The Ondo were more favoured by this agreement, since they had lost more of their slaves to the Ife side. Akintoye *Ibid.*
39. C.O. 147/23, Fowler to Hennessey, 6 August 1872, cited by Akintoye, 'The Ondo Road...' *op. cit.*
40. Phillips' letter Book and Diary 1/1/9 *N.A.I.*
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. Akintoye, *Revolution...* p. 175.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*
47. C.S.O. 1/112 Moloney to Knutsford *N.A.I.*
48. The period of exile is remembered in Ondo consciousness as Oke–Opa era. Ok'opa would appear to be the base of the monarch from where military operations were directed.
49. For details on the evolution of the chieftaincy system in Ondo, Oshin, V.O. *op. cit.* Chapters 1 and 2. See also Lloyd P.C.: *Yoruba Land Law* for a description of the chieftaincy system in Ondo.
50. Lloyd P.C. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*
52. C.S.O. 26/4 'Intelligence Report on Ondo District, 1935' *N.A.I.*

## Chapter Five

# Ede Participation in the 19th Century Yoruba Wars

G.O. Oyeweso

This chapter, has two objectives. First, it sets out to examine the extent of Ede's involvement in the 19th century Yoruba warfare and how she was able to survive that era of total war. Second, it intends to examine the socio-political and demographic consequences of these wars on Ede. However, before these could be satisfactorily done, a short excursion into Ede history before C. 1821 is necessary.

### Ede Before The Outbreak of Owu War

The present Ede is not the one founded by the famous Timi Agbale Olofa-Ina, Ede culture-hero. Like Ibadan, the present Ede was established in the 19th century. This is because Ede-Ile, the first Ede settlement established as a military outpost in the 16th century by the Oyo authorities, had to be shifted to the other side of the Osun River around 1818-1819.<sup>1</sup> This change of settlement was largely in response to the breakdown of Oyo central authority in 1796. Hitherto, the military might of Oyo had provided security and political stability for most of the Yoruba country. As a sequel to this breakdown of normal governmental authority, Yorubaland was thrown into confusion and anarchy as powerful individuals started molesting and harrassing innocent citizens. Leading Oyo provincial chiefs such as Adegun, the Onikoyi, the Opele of Gbogun and others who had the might started carving out small empires for themselves.<sup>2</sup> A body of bandits, the *Ogo Were*, also terrorised the people in the present day Osun area. In this confused atmosphere, Kakanfo Afonja also successfully declared Ilorin independent of Oyo and from there he organised raids into Ede, Osogbo, Ilobu, Ejigbo and other towns in the Epo district.<sup>3</sup> In fact, with the Fulani conquest of Nupeland in 1816 and Afonja's alliance with the Muslim revivalists in 1817, the security of Ede and her neighbours became precarious.<sup>4</sup> It was these developments that led to the evacuation of Ede-Ile and the establishment of "new" Ede. There is no doubt that if Ede was to be safe from Fulani attack, it needed a natural barrier to shield her (among other military considerations). The man who had this political foresight was Timi Kubolaje Agbonran.<sup>5</sup>

At Agbonran's occupation of *Igbo Obotugbo* there were some Ife settlers.<sup>6</sup> The head of this community was a hunter called Lagbonnu. Traditions claim that Agboran's presence combined with the "devilish red colour in his eyeballs" made Lagbonnu sleepless and, consequently, he moved to the site now called Ile-Asunnara—(Asunnara means to sleep well and stretch one's limbs).<sup>7</sup> Like all oral traditions, this account is



subject to critical analysis and interpretation. We are inclined to believe that since Lagbonnu was a hunter, he could not just have evacuated his settlement without offering some resistance. That he was the head of that community prior to Agbonran's occupation also points to the fact that he would not have surrendered his leadership so easily to an "alien." A possible interpretation, therefore, is that both might have engaged themselves in a military contest which ended in the defeat and humiliation of Lagbonnu. What further reinforces this viewpoint is that Lagbonnu was said to have married his daughter, Jojolola, to Agbonran. This marriage is clearly a diplomatic overture on the part of Lagbonnu to come into terms with Agbonran. The marriage also indicates that the Lagbonnu's were assimilated rather than exterminated.<sup>8</sup>

Before Agbonran could effectively occupy the present site, traditions also claim that he had to fight a bloody war against a Yoruba group at the present location of Timi Agbale Grammar School. This group is believed in Ede to be the Modakeke.<sup>9</sup> This claim, however, is not supported by available evidence. Modakeke, as a term, came into use around 1846–47 when *Ooni* Adegunle Abeweila created a new community for Oyo migrants who had nearly swamped his town.<sup>10</sup> Yet this tradition cannot be simply dismissed as worthless. In fact, the probable group might be some fleeing Oyo refugees searching for a more secure place of abode after the collapse of internal authority at Oyo around 1796.<sup>11</sup>

The relevance of our discussion so far is to show that Ede, like Ibadan, Ijaye and Abeokuta, was born out of the circumstances prevailing in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Hardly had Ede been founded when she found herself engaged in wars of survival and wars to repulse the Fulani incursions into Yorubaland.

### Ede From c.1821 – c.1828

After Ede had displaced the existing population and established a foothold in the present site, she embarked on measures to protect her security. Traditions relate that all the four entries to Ede were manned by well-equipped soldiers. As part of the security measures, new migrants to the town were quartered separately so that they would be under constant surveillance.<sup>12</sup> *Timi* Bamgbaiye Ajeniju also sensed that *Oludu* Aderinke, the ruler of *Ido* Waluse was a security risk because he feared that *Ido* might be used as a base for *Ijesa* onslaught on Ede.<sup>13</sup> He therefore declared a war on him. The war took place in 1825 and was won by the Ede forces.<sup>14</sup> Bamgbaiye then ordered *Ido* to its present site, near the *Osun* river, where she could be under surveillance and control. In order to come into diplomatic terms with the *Timi*, Aderinke, gave his daughter to him. The product of that marriage was Prince Folarin, Bamgbaiye's eldest son. It was Folarin's connection with *Ido*–*Osun* that gave rise to his cognomen: "Oje *Timi*, j'oba'do" (the aspirant to the thrones of Ede and *Ido*).<sup>15</sup>

However, the first major test of Ede's ability to survive in this tumultuous period was the Ede–Ogbomoso war, otherwise referred to as the Lasinmi war which took place, most probably, in 1826.<sup>16</sup>

The basic cause of the conflict, according to Johnson and Oyerinde, was that Ede refused to pay allegiance to Ogbomoso.<sup>17</sup> This claim, however, is not supported by available evidence and Ede is not known to have come under Ogbomoso's rule before or during the 19th century. What is known of Ede's history, prior to the 19th century, indicates that she was a strong and vibrant Yoruba town. Ede, in fact, served as a

military base for many Oyo expeditions into the Ijesa country. And as long as Oyo remained militarily strong and the governmental machinery intact, Ede was not attacked by any Yoruba town or sub-group save the Ijesa. In fact, both Ogbomoso and Ede protected Oyo imperial interests throughout the 18th century.<sup>18</sup> The cause(s) of Lasinmi War should, therefore, be sought within the context of the general political situation in Yorubaland in the early years of the 19th century – breakdown of law and order.

Like his predecessor in office and other Oyo provincial chiefs, Kakanfo Teyeje was probably trying to carve out a sphere of influence for himself or being a bully. He probably calculated that Ede, a nascent community, would not be able to organise any meaningful resistance against the Ogbomoso onslaught.

Traditions relate that the duration of the actual warfare was only ninety days.<sup>19</sup> While Ogbomoso forces camped at Iloba, Ede forces camped inside the town. During these days, fierce battles were fought but without clear victories. Ede was defended heroically while the Ogbomoso forces would not yield. When the war was inconclusive, arbitration was proposed by Asegbe, an Ilari of the Olofa.<sup>20</sup> According to Johnson, *Timi Bamgbaiye* Ajeniju agreed to lay down arms because "We are the same tribe and one family and why should we destroy one another in the very face of our common enemy (Fulani Jihadists), destroying us from without..."<sup>21</sup> Oyerinde also gives a similar account: "All of us are one and Yoruba should not kill their kind."<sup>22</sup> In this regard, one may describe Bamgbaiye as a Yoruba nationalist and patriot who clearly understood the politics of his time. He was prepared to sacrifice his personal pride for the unity of the Yoruba in the face of a common enemy — the Fulani.

One interesting aspect of the war is that Ede was said to have paid ten bags of cowries and ten goats to Ogbomoso after the truce.<sup>23</sup> A plausible explanation is that the payment probably indicates Ede's military defeat. This suggestion, however, is tenuous. Traditions available at Ede maintain that the Ogbomoso forces were decisively defeated; the site of the battle has since been called "Ojulairede, Ede O se ko" (we only saw Ede from afar, we could not conquer it).<sup>24</sup> Besides, Johnson asserts that at Asegbe's intervention, "the strength of the besiegers and the besieged was well-nigh spent."<sup>25</sup> Oyerinde also shares the same view: "The two of them had fought till they were tired."<sup>26</sup> In other words, it appeared a contest of equals.

What then is the significance of the payment? In our view, the payment may be a mark of respect for the office of *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo*, the highest military title in Yorubaland. It may also be to placate Teyeje whose ego had been deflated and who probably wanted to continue the war in defiance of the voice of reason. However, one outcome of the war that is clear is that the war affected agricultural output as is evident in Bamgbaiye's *oriki*:

The war-monger started war without a plan. Okotomponi started war without reflection. Ogbomoso declared war on Ede without the cost  
For when her forces got to Iloba they were only able to plunder yams.<sup>27</sup> (emphasis mine).

Another war in which Ede fought during the 19th century was the Pamo War of 1828.<sup>28</sup> The war had its origin in the struggle for leadership between Adegun, the *Onikoyi* and Teyeje, the *Kakanfo*. Since the collapse of Oyo authority, these provincial chiefs became rivals. Each wanted to assert his supremacy and neither wanted to be

subordinated to the other. In fact, in order to diminish the influence and power of Toyeye, the *Onikoyi* created another *Kakanfo* in the person of Edun of Gbogun.<sup>29</sup> It was this unhealthy rivalry that culminated in the Pamo War in which Ede was involved as an ally of the legitimate Yoruba *Kakanfo* at Ogbomoso.<sup>30</sup> Other personalities that supported *Kakanfo* Toyeye of Ogbomoso included the *Oluwo* of Iwo and *Solagberu* of Ilorin. The *Onikoyi* group, on the other hand, drew considerable assistance from Abdul Salami, the *Emir* of Ilorin who saw a chance to exploit the in-fighting in Yorubaland. The ensuing war was bitterly fought but, in the long run, ended in the defeat of the *Kakanfo* group. Eminent rulers such as the *Timi* of Ede, *Ayepe* the king of Erin and Chief Aina–Abutu–Sogun<sup>31</sup>, according to Johnson, lost their lives in the war.

The claim that the *Timi* died in this war, however, raises some doubts. First, the reigning *Timi* of Ede during the Owu War (1821–25) was Bamgbaiye Ajeniju.<sup>32</sup> Second, he was also the ruler during the Lasinmi War of 1826. Third, this *Timi* was among the principal Yoruba chiefs who participated in the Eleduwe war of 1835.<sup>33</sup> Thus, it is clear that Bamgbaiye was the *Timi* of Ede, at least, between 1825 and 1835. We can, therefore, assert that the reigning *Timi* did not go to this war in person but delegated one of his chiefs to represent him.

### **Ede And Yoruba – Fulani Politics (1824– 1840)**

Ede also participated in the various wars of resistance fought to expel the Fulani from Yorubaland especially between 1824 and 1840. Available traditions tell us that Ede contributed men and material resources to the Ogele and Mugba wars fought between 1824 and 1826.<sup>34</sup> These efforts did not yield any positive result nor achieve the desired objective because of what Johnson called "lack of unity of purpose among the Yoruba chiefs."<sup>35</sup> In the confusion that followed the breakdown of Oyo authority, most leading Yoruba chiefs were only thinking in terms of personal gains that could accrue to them in such a chaotic situation. Consequently, they did not put forward the necessary concerted effort that could dislodge the Fulani from Ilorin and other parts of Yorubaland that had come under Fulani control. A further demonstration of this fact was the Pamo war earlier discussed.

After the Pamo war the position of the Fulani became consolidated and their goal was the complete subjugation of the whole of Yorubaland. The Fulani even inflicted another crushing defeat on the Yoruba forces during the subsequent Kanla War. It was this failure that prompted the Eleduwe War of 1835. *Alaafin* Oluewu made a passionate appeal to all Yoruba chiefs to sink their differences and unite to destroy Fulani domination and hegemony. Despite the human and material resources expended on the previous abortive efforts, Ede authorities were not discouraged and *Timi* Bamgbaiye Ajeniju was one of the Yoruba chiefs that immediately responded to Oluewu's call. These included Kurunmi of Ijaye, Ayo Abemo, Atiba of Ago–Oja and Oluyole of Ibadan.<sup>36</sup>

Like other previous wars of resistance, the Eleduwe war failed to achieve its goal — expulsion of the Fulani from Yorubaland. Besides, the war led to the total destruction and desertion of Old Oyo and the death of King Eleduwe of Nikki. R.S. Smith claimed that the battle was lost because the Yoruba chiefs conspired to retreat in the face of invasion.<sup>37</sup> However, a more fundamental cause might be that the chiefs were not prepared to exchange one burden for another. They had the fear that they might soon



pass under Bariba domination and this fear was genuine as evident in this remark reportedly made by King Eleduwe:

See the corpulent fellow (Timi Bamgbaiye of Ede), one of those who made themselves fat upon the King's diverted revenues. Never mind, he will also be dealt with after the war as he deserves.<sup>38</sup>

Such a statement was unwarranted and unfortunate in a war situation, more so when the war had not been fought and won. Thus, in 1836, Old Oyo was finally sacked, ruined and deserted.<sup>39</sup>

### Ede-Ibadan Relations, 1836-1886

The fall of Old Oyo created a vacuum and, consequently, a struggle began among some Yoruba states to fill it. In fact, three power-centres emerged: Ago d'Oyo, Ijaye and Ibadan. Since Oyo was not militarily strong like the other two palatinates, the new *Alaafin*, Atiba, utilized diplomacy to bring them under control. He conferred the title of *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo* on Kurunmi of Ijaye with the responsibility of defending the western frontiers, while Oluyole of Ibadan was awarded *Basorun* with the responsibility of defending the north and north-eastern frontiers.<sup>40</sup> With this reconstruction, Oluyole came home to appoint Oderinde as his *Balogun*. With this appointment, it was clear that Ibadan would soon attack any of the Yoruba towns. Ibadan military tradition demanded that a newly elected *Balogun* should set out on an expedition against a town of his choice to prove his military valour and Ede was chosen.<sup>41</sup> According to Johnson, there was no other cogent reason for the *Balogun*'s choice besides this military tradition but this may not be wholly true. In fact, the reason could be to punish Ede which did not participate actively or whole-heartedly in the Eleduwe War. For Ibadan might have interpreted Ede's action as being friendly with the Fulani, her arch-enemy, whom she had sworn to drive out of Yorubaland. She probably feared that Ede might be used as a base for subsequent Ilorin attacks on Ibadan. For a number of days, there were ominous hints of war between Ibadan and Ede. In the long run, however, the military action was not carried out because it would appear that Elepo, an influential Ibadan war-chief, vetoed Ede's destruction.<sup>42</sup> Ibadan forces therefore marched on to an alternative town, Ilobu.

Between 1839 and 1840, the Fulani intensified their action for the control of Yorubaland. They laid siege to Osogbo but Ibadan and other Yoruba towns came to her rescue. In the encounter, Ibadan effectively defeated Ilorin for the first time in about ten years.<sup>43</sup> The basic reason behind the success was the unity of purpose among the three principal Yoruba leaders, Oluyole, Atiba and Kurunmi. However, this unity was ephemeral. Within a short time Oluyole and Kurunmi soon resorted to rivalling each other. Indeed, after 1840, Ibadan embarked on systematic reconquering of the Old Oyo provinces east of the Ogun, as far north as Ofa land then the Ijesa, Akoko and Ekiti countries.<sup>44</sup>

These incursions expressly demonstrated to Kurunmi that Ibadan was bidding for the political hegemony of Yorubaland and this heightened the rivalry between them. It was this struggle for supremacy that led to the Batedo War of 1844 with Ede, initially, taking side with Ibadan. The reigning *Timi* was Ojo Arohanran.<sup>45</sup> He, however, did not go to this war personally but delegated *Prince* Folarin, his nephew's son. When Ede

reviewed the objects of the war, she concluded that Ijaye was protecting the interest of the *Alaafin*.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, Ede switched side to Ijaye and fought against Ibadan forces. In this war, Ibadan adopted diversionary tactics against Ede — she stationed two war-chiefs at Ejigbo to raid Ede farms.<sup>47</sup> This development forced *Prince Folarin* to leave Ijaye camp and deal with the Ejigbo menace. In this Ejigbo encounter, Ede got the assistance of Chief Elepo, an important Ibadan war-chief of Ijaye origin. However, the Ejigbo expedition was a failure; *Prince Folarin* not only lost his life, but Chief Elepo was also mortally wounded.<sup>48</sup> The Batedo War itself proved inconclusive as a result of the mediating role of *Alaafin Atiba*.<sup>49</sup> Though both camps dispersed, the question of supremacy had not been settled. Hence further clashes still loomed in the background.

In 1854, Ede was again in conflict with Ibadan. The direct cause of the war was that Ibadan troops, under Balogun Ibikunle, in their bid to relieve Otun-Ekiti from Fulani domination had to pass through Ede territory but the *Timi* would not condone such.<sup>50</sup> This uncooperativeness incensed the *Otun Balogun*, Ogunmola, who therefore, opted for military action against Ede but Balogun Ibikunle maintained that starvation was a weapon of war.<sup>51</sup> In the long run, it was the latter's view that prevailed. Consequently, Ede was surrounded by Ibadan troops and this made it impossible for farmers to get food from their farms. The restless soldiers also resorted to eating and plundering food crops. This measure soon hit hard at the populace and *Timi Arohanran* was, therefore, forced to sue for peace. The siege lasted for 14 days. Ibadan traditions also record that the *Timi* gave Balogun Ibikunle "two costly beads" before he finally evacuated his troops.<sup>52</sup>

Apart from the issue of free passage through Ede territory, the 1854 war could also be a punishment for the "offence" of 1844 when Ede defected to Ijaye side. This point becomes weighty when we note that the Batedo war was fought for the balance of power in Yorubaland. With the *Timi*'s defection and Iwo's revolt, the balance was gradually tilted against Ibadan in favour of Ijaye which proved stronger in the Batedo war.<sup>53</sup>

From 1854 onwards, Ede relations with Ibadan appeared to have been normalised. For Ede allied with Ibadan in all the subsequent wars she fought and peace efforts made in the 19th century. This change of policy probably was necessitated by Ede's realisation that, to survive the turbulent and tumultuous period, a policy of peaceful co-existence must be pursued with Ibadan as a deep commitment by Ede to protect the integrity of Yorubaland. Thus Ede participated in the Alabaja conference of 15 December 1854 where it was represented by two delegates.<sup>54</sup> Ede also fought in support of Ibadan during the Ijaye war of 1859–1865,<sup>55</sup> and the Jalumi war of 1878<sup>56</sup> fought to expel the Fulani from northern-Yorubaland. During the latter war, Ede forces under *Timi Lagunju* camped at Ikirun and the site, to this day, is referred to as Oke *Timi*.<sup>57</sup> Lastly, Ede also allied with Ibadan in the Ekitiparapo war in which the deposed *Timi Olunloye*, captain of Ede forces, lost his life.<sup>58</sup>

## Impact of the Wars

First and foremost, many illustrious men and chiefs lost their lives: *Prince Folarin* in the Ejigbo expedition, deposed *Timi Olunloye* in the Ekitiparapo war, General Isiboni in the Lasinmi war and others.

Second, the wars were also severe in terms of disruption and destruction of

agricultural activities. The Lasinmi war, particularly, affected food production because Ogbomoso forces plundered Ede farms, destroyed and took away many valuable food crops. Also, in the Ede-Ibadan war of 1854, Ibikunle's soldiers adopted the tactics of kidnapping and molesting farmers.

Third, they boosted the population of Ede. As a result of the collapse of Old Oyo and the increasing Fulani pressure, many Yoruba elements moved from the open grassland of the north to the subtropical forest of the south. In moving southwards, Ede was one of the many Yoruba towns they populated.<sup>59</sup> It is impossible here to list all those who came but one can attempt a survey of some. One group came from Iwo and settled at *Talaafia* compound while another group came from *Ogbaagbaa* and founded Ile-Imole. In general, the following towns, among others, established a compound each in Ede in the 19th century: Awo, Ara, Ojo, Olufinran, Iragberi, Ekuro, Akinlade, Ajagemo and Ato.<sup>60</sup> Also, two northern Yoruba towns settled on Ede territory. Ofatedo and Erin-Osun.<sup>61</sup> Both have their original home in Ofa and Erin-Ile in present day Kwara State.

Another impact of the wars was cultural diffusion. Oyo cultural traits like Sango cult, weaving and clothed Egungun spread to other parts of Yorubaland and Ede was not an exception.<sup>62</sup> This point is vividly brought out by the striking resemblance between Ede and Oyo crafts and in the celebration of Sango as a state festival in Ede. Besides, Ulli Beier has also stated that an *Edan-Ogboni* was brought to Ede, most probably, by one of the fleeing refugees towards the tail end of the Owu War.<sup>63</sup>

Moreover, Islam registered considerable progress during this era. These wars led to the influx of many Oyo, Ofa, Iwo, Erin and Ogbagbaa Muslims into Ede. This in turn meant an increase in the size and strength of muslim adherents. The inflated population generated the building of new mosques and the expansion of the existing ones. It is also significant to note that Ede produced the first Muslim *Timi* during the period — Abibu Lagunju. It was this *Timi* who gave Islam the very firm foundation it enjoys today in Ede.<sup>64</sup>

More importantly, however, the wars affected the traditional power configuration in Ede. Prior to the 19th century the *Jagun* and *Ikolaba*, two civil chiefs, were the closest to the *Timi* and his most influential advisers but the wars disrupted this arrangement. In particular, the military came to the forefront of Ede politics while the Council of Chiefs headed by the *Balogun* became the highest decision-making organ of government. The *Timi* gave thoughtful considerations to the advice of this Council and, in most cases, respected its decisions.<sup>65</sup> The post of *Jagun* was also given some modifications. During the 19th century, the *Jagun* combined civil and military functions. Apart from being responsible for the installation rites of all chiefs and the worship of *Ogun*, the god of war, the *Jagun* was also "charged with the onerous duties of intelligence service, thus knowing of the advance of any invasion and their possible prevention."<sup>66</sup> Apart from the predominance of the war chiefs over the civil chiefs, all the military titles inaugurated in the 19th century Ede were the exact replica of those of Ibadan: *Balogun*, *Otun Balogun*, *Osi Balogun*, *Asipa*, *Ekerin*, *Ekarun*, *Ekefa*, *Asaju*, *Seriki*, *Areago*, *Bada*, *Sarumi*, *Aare Abese* and *Aare Onibon*. The title *Mogaji*, head of a compound, was also a 19th century creation. Indeed, the military became so dominant in politics that they dethroned *Timi* Abibu Lagunju who became so high-handed in his attempt to rule the town in accordance with the laws and dictates of Islam.

Lastly, the wars provided an opportunity for the subsequent British occupation of



the Yoruba country. Acting as peace-makers, the British were able to make Yoruba chiefs assent to far-reaching demands in the treaties which made British rule possible. With the 1893 Treaty, in particular, Ede came under British domination. Clause one of the treaty stated thus:

That the general administration of the internal affairs of the following Yoruba towns, viz: Iwo, *Ede*, Osogbo, Ikirun, Ogbomoso, Ejigbo and Isẹyin and in all countries in the so-called Ekun Otun, Ekun Osi, is vested in the general government of Ibadan and the local authorities of the said towns act in harmony with and are subject to Ibadan notwithstanding that the Alaafin is recognized as the King and Head of Yorubaland. <sup>67</sup> (emphasis mine)

With this treaty, the independence and sovereignty of Ede was annulled and she finally became subordinate to the Ibadan administration. The colonial phase had begun.

## Conclusion

From the foregoing, one may assert with reasonable degree of confidence that the history of Ede in the 19th century is essentially a military history. For the present Ede was not only founded out of the chaos that accompanied the collapse of authority at Oyo, she was also, for a greater part of the century, fighting either a defensive war as in the case of Lasinmi war, or security war as in the Ede-Ido war. In fact, from 1820 onwards, Ede assumed increasing importance in Yoruba politics and her ruler was consulted on all issues of war and peace. Ede not only participated in the wars to repulse the Fulani thrust, she was also in alliance with the various parties involved in the Batedo, Ijaye, Jalumi and Ekitiparapo Wars.

We should, however, note that the underlining motives for the various alliances that Ede conducted during the period was her survival and what she regarded as legitimacy. In any age of "survival of the fittest," benevolent neutrality could be suicidal. Thus, Ede alliance with any of the warring parties was not based on eternal friendship but on those considerations that would guarantee her security and survival. For instance, she fought against Ogbomoso in the Lasinmi war but later allied with her in the Pamo War. In the same vein, she fought on the side of Ijaye during the Batedo war of 1844 but later pitched tent against her in the 1859–65 war (Ijaye).

Similarly, Ede was at logger-heads with Ibadan between 1844 and 1854 but this did not deter her from fighting on Ibadan's side during the Ijaye, Jalumi and Ekitiparapo wars. Indeed, Ede authorities correctly assessed the direction to which the balance of power was swinging at every point in time and utilised the readings to advantage. In fact, from 1854 to the end of the century, there was a sort of Ede-Ibadan military confederacy with Ibadan as the stronger partner.

In a nutshell, the antidote for Ede survival during this century of total warfare is not that she knew when to be in an alliance and when to quit. More fundamental to her survival, however, is the fact that she allied, at the most appropriate time, with Ibadan, the most militarily strong power in 19th century Yorubaland.

## Notes and References

1. This suggestion is based on two grounds. First, the Fulani threat on Ede only became real with the conquest of Nupeland in 1816 and Afonja's alliance with Muslim forces in 1817. Second, the tradition which claimed that Ede was established ten years prior to Ibadan foundation in 1829.  
Oral interview: Messrs. Raji Akosile, Lawani Atanda and Salawu Okunola, all local historians; 29/9/81.
2. Akinjogbin, I.A.: "The Prelude to the Yoruba Civil Wars of the Nineteenth Century," *Odu: University of Ife Journal of West African Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1965, p. 38.
3. Johnson, Samuel (Revd.) *The History of the Yoruba From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, (Lagos: C.S.S. Bookshops, 1973 reprint) pp. 197-198.
4. (i) Fulani Conquest of Nupeland took place in 1816. See, Law, R.C.C., *The Oyo Empire*, (London: Clarendon, 1977) pp. 235-250.  
(ii) For details on Afonja's relationship with the Muslim Fulani See Ahmadu ibn Abu Bakr, *Ta'rif akhbar al-qurum min Umara bila Ilorin* dated 24/3/1912 (Trans. Martin, G.B.). I am grateful to Prof. I.A. Akinjogbin who made a copy of this paper available to me while I was doing a special paper on "Yoruba Wars in the Nineteenth Century" in 1982.
5. Oral interview: Omo-Oba Elkanah Adedeji, Mogaji Nihinlola Oyewale, Mogaji Olapade Arohanran; October, 1981.
6. The original name for Ede's present site.
7. Oral interview: Mr. Jimoh Amobi, a prince from Agbonran ruling family, Mr. Olalekan Olapade and Mogaji Salami Lagunju; Nov. 1981.
8. For details see, Oyeweso, G.O. "Traditions of Origin and Growth of Ede up to 1960", Original Essay, History Department, University of Ife, August 1982 pp. 16-19.
9. Oral interview: Raji Akosile, Magaji Salami Oyebanji, Raji Oladimeji; August, 1981.
10. Prof. Akinjogbin I.A. in a personal communication in 1982, suggested 1846-47 as possible date of establishment of Modakeke.
11. That people had been fleeing from Oyo since around 1796 can be corroborated from this saying:  
"Laiye Abiodun L'afi Igba won 'wo Laiye Aole l'adi Adikale"  
"In Abiodun's reign we weighed money by bushels In Aole's reign, we packed up to flee."  
Source: Johnson, S., *The History of the Yorubas* p. 188.
12. Oral interview: Mogaji Situ Laitan and Omo-Oba Salami Oyelakin; September 1981.
13. Ido was then at Waluse, very near Ilesa. It was a border town between Ede and Ilesa.  
For details, see, Olunlade, Chief, *Ede: A Short History*. trans. Akinjogbin, I.A. (Ibadan: Ministry of Education 1961) pp. 30-33.
14. The date is based on the tradition which says that the war coincided with the end of the Owu War. Messrs Oyewale, Situ Adekolu 5/12/81.

15. Oral interview: Omo-Oba Folarin Oyeweso, Mogaji Olawuyi Adunoye, and Chief Ayoade; Dec. 1981.
16. This suggestion is based on two premises. First, Johnson records that the war broke out shortly after the Ikoyi Congress which was held shortly after Clapperton's visit to Oyo in 1826. The Second premise is that the person who launched the attack on Ede was Toyeye, Afonja's lieutenant, who had just been promoted to the rank of *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo*. This promotion definitely took place sometime in 1825–1826 since Afonja himself died in 1824.
17. (i) Johnson, S., *History of the Yorubas*, p. 211.  
(ii) Oyerinde, N.D., *Iwe Itan Ogbomoso* p. 7
18. For early history of Ede, See Oyeweso, G.O. "Tradition of Origin and Growth of Ede up to 1960". pp. 8–21.
19. Olunlade, Chief, *Ede: A Short History*, p.32.
20. Johnson, S., *History of the Yorubas*, p. 212
21. *Ibid.* p. 212
22. Oyerinde, N.D., *Iwe Itan Ogbomoso*, p. 79
23. Johnson, S., *History of the Yorubas*, p. 213
24. Ojulairede is one of the main streets in Ede today. My informants say that the name is an indication of Ede's victory over Ogbomoso. It is, in fact, possible that the Ogbomoso forces were defeated in an early encounter before they later reinforced. This was probably used to rationalize Ede's performances in the war as a whole.
25. Johnson, S., *History of the Yorubas*, p. 212
26. Oyerinde, N.D., *Iwe Itan Ogbomoso* p. 80.
27. Adetoyese, Laoye, *English Translation of the Oriki of Eleven of the Timis of Ede* (trans. Alhaji Adekilejun), (Ilorin: Hammed Press; 1981). p.5
28. This war has been dated 1828 because it occurred after the ascension of Abdul Salami (as the Emir of Ilorin) and we know that this ascension took place around 1827.  
Source: *Ta'lif akbbar...*
29. Johnson, S., *History of the Yorubas* p. 203.
30. Oral interview: Mogaji Salawu Okunola, Yesufu Adekunle; 9/12/81
31. Johnson, S., *History of the Yorubas*. p. 203.
32. Beier, Ulli, "A Year of Sacred Festivals in One Yoruba Town," *Nigeria Magazine*, (Lagos, 1959) p.9
33. Atanda Mogaji Lawani 28/8/81. Olunlade, *Ede: A Short History*, p. 21.
34. Oral interview: Oba Tijani Oyewusi, the Timi of Ede, Raji Akosile, 25/9/81.
35. Johnson, S., *History of the Yorubas*, p. 217
36. *Ibid.* p. 218
37. Ajayi, J.F.A. and Smith, R.S., *Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century*, p.14.
38. Johnson, S., *History of the Yorubas*, pp. 264–265.
39. Akinjogbin, I.A. "A Chronology of Yoruba History", *Odu: University of Ife Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1965, p. 86.
40. Biobaku, S.O., *The Egba and their Neighbours*, (Oxford, 1957), p. 64.
41. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, p. 283.
42. *Ibid.* p. 284



43. Ajayi and Smith, *Yoruba Warfare* p. 135.
44. *Ibid.* p. 136
45. Oral interview: Mogaji Olapade Arohanran, Alhaji Mosudi Ikolaba, Mogaji Situ Laitan; January 1982.
46. Olunlade; Ede: *A Short History*, p. 23.
47. *Ibid.* p. 23.
48. Oral interview; Chief Yesufu Amob 19/7/81, Alabi Folarin, 3/1/82
49. Ajayi and Smith, *Yoruba Warfare*, p.69
50. Oral interview: Raji Akosile 2/1/82. Oba J.J. Akinpelu, the Aragberi of Iragberi 10/2/82 (now deceased).
51. Akinyele, I.B., *Iwe Itan Ibadan ati die ninu Ilu agbegbe re bi Iwo, Osogbo ati Ikirun* (Ibadan: Board Publications, 1981) p. 56.
52. *Ibid.* p. 57.
53. Akintoye, S.A., *Revolution and Power Politics...* p. 39.
54. Oral interview: Alabi Folarin 3/1/82, Salami Adeoti, 15/2/82.
55. Oral interview: Raji Akosile 2/1/82, Mogaji Salami Oyeibanji 11/10/81.
56. *Ibid.*
57. Oba Tijani Oyewusi 25/9/81.
58. Interview with Raji Akosile 2/1/82.
59. Ajayi and Akintoye *Yorubaland in the 19th Century*, p. 299.
60. For details on the demographic consequences of the wars on Ede, see Oyeweso, G.O., "Traditions of Origin and Growth of Ede."
61. Herman-Hodge, H.R., *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province*, (London, 1921) p. 163.
62. Ajayi, J.F.A., "The Aftermath of the Fall of Old Oyo," *History of West Africa Vol. 2* (eds. Ajayi, J.F.A. and Crowder, M.), (London: Longman, 1974).
63. Beier, Ulli, *A Year of Sacred Festivals*, p.9.
64. For details on the reign of and Islamic policies pursued by Abibu Lagunju, see G.O. Oyeweso, *Traditions of Origin and Growth of Ede up to 1960*, pp. 46-50.
65. *Ibid.* pp. 42-44.
66. *Ede: Oyo State Town Series Number One/Fourteen*, (Ibadan: Ministry of Information, 1976) p.4.
67. Johnson, S., *History of the Yorubas*, p. 654.



## Chapter Six

# War And Change In 19th Century Igbomina

Funso Afolayan

### The Antecedents

The Igbomina are a distinct dialectal unit of the Yoruba. The term Igbomina refers to the people and the land they occupy. They are located within latitude 8° and 9° North, and longitude 4° and 6° East. They are made up of many sub-units some of which are: the Ila, Ipo, Iyangba, Isin, Oro, Irese, Esisa, Ile-Ire, Oke Ode and Share. All the Igbomina, apart from the Ila sub-unit, are presently located in Kwara State of Nigeria.

It is not definitely known when the peopling of Igbomina region began. Local traditions emphasise the existence of fairly well defined states in the area before the 19th century. Indeed, by the early 18th century, many independent state structures could be identified. These included Omu-Aran, Ajase, Isanlu-Isin, Iwo, Edidi, Oro, Ora, Aun, Ikosin and Igbaja. Each of these possessed separate traditions of foundation and growth distinct from the Ila kingdom<sup>1</sup>. It is out of these conglomeration that the Igbomina came into being. Most notable of these was the kingdom of Ila, whose ruler, the *Orangun*, is traditionally regarded as the leader of the Igbomina<sup>2</sup>. However, a closer examination of Igbomina traditions show that before the emergence of the Ila Kingdom, there were other sizeable communities in the Igbomina country<sup>3</sup>. The *Orangun* tradition has led many to postulate a common tradition of origin for all the component sections of Igbomina and to assume that the *Orangun* was 'the monarch of Igbomina'<sup>4</sup>. But the *Orangun* was not always the most powerful Igbomina ruler, nor was his suzerainty always acknowledged in every part of Igbomina. Writing in September 1917, the Resident of Ilorin Province, K. V. Elphinstone, made a significant observation:

The *Orangun* is the senior chief of all Igbonas. When however it comes to looking into his position it appears that he never has been overlord of any of the Igbonas on this side of the boundary (i.e. in the Ilorin Province)... his power is obtained from his juju or title or both...<sup>5</sup>

Whatever claims the *Orangun* made to leadership of the Igbomina appears to have been based substantially on the traditional claims of ancestral links with Oduduwa – the reputed eponymous founder of the Yoruba. If the *Orangun* had some pre-eminence in Igbomina in pre-colonial times, such pre-eminence had waned considerably by the 18th century as a result of a challenge by the rising power of the *Olupo* of Ajase Ipo. The *Alaafin* of Oyo had boosted and enhanced the *Olupo's* influence in the Igbomina area: first by making him a local superintendent of Oyo's interests, and second, by using him to counterbalance the traditional importance of the *Orangun*. However, the *Olupo's* power and influence itself remained essentially limited in spite of the backing by Oyo. Thus no Igbomina ruler could be regarded as the paramount ruler of all Igbomina; in pre-19th century times. The Igbomina country was settled by different



kinds of migrants. The late 17th and early 18th centuries witnessed the peopling of Isin, Oke Ode, Ile-Ire and Esisa sections of Igbomina.

Over the centuries, the people have knitted together into a dialectal entity of the Yoruba. In spite of the proliferation of autonomous polities there has been considerable interactions in religion and politics. Thus, over the years, the initial differences among the component groups began to disappear giving way to a sub-group consciousness. Nevertheless, the Igbomina never formed a single political entity and slight variations persisted in the social and political systems of different communities. The pattern of social relationship and organisation was generally similar to what obtained in the Ekiti, Akoko, Ijesa and to some extent the Okun-Yoruba countries.<sup>6</sup> The 'ministate' was the commonest feature of their socio-political organisation. According to Ade Obayemi;

the existence of fairly well-defined mini-states... of these, Iwo, Owu, Oba and others existed in the Igbomina area...<sup>7</sup>

### The Invasions

This traditional system, however, came under considerable stress in the 18th and 19th centuries when the Igbomina were subjected to constant military pressures from their more powerful neighbours.

The location of Igbomina, among different and often distinct neighbours, rendered it an area of plural cultural interactions over the years. Igbomina was bounded to the north-west by the ancient Oyo kingdom, to the north-east by the Nupe, to the east by the Yagba and to the south-east by the Ekiti. Among these neighbours, interactions with the Nupe were probably the earliest and the most intense. Some Igbomina settlements such as Igbaja, Rore, Ora and Oke-Ode are said to have been originally peopled from Nupeland.<sup>8</sup> There were cultural interactions as born out in the *egungun* festival believed to have been introduced into Igbomina from Nupeland. Interaction also took place in economic spheres as there were trading activities between the two groups.

From traditions prevalent in Ajase, Omu-Aran and Omupo it appears that, by the 17th century, military encounters had started to take place between the Igbomina and their neighbours. It is claimed that hostilities started with the Ijesa who were harassing and enslaving the Igbomina around the present day Ajase. The Ijesa marauders were however, repulsed by an army jointly led by the *Olomu* of Omu and the ruler of Bagiddi.<sup>9</sup> Similar attempts made by Benin armies to penetrate into Igbomina were thwarted through local cooperative residents in affected areas.<sup>10</sup> However, Oyo was able to establish a military control over parts of the Igbomina areas and in the event raised the status of the *Olupo* to that of a prominent ruler in the area.<sup>11</sup> But by the mid 18th century, Oyo's control over Igbomina had considerably weakened. This could be ascribed partly to the constitutional troubles within Oyo kingdom itself and partly to the emergence of Nupe as the predominant power in the north eastern Yoruba region. As a response to the growth of Nupe influence, Oyo had attempted to establish a military outpost in the Igbomina country.<sup>12</sup> This however failed to check the Nupe who systematically extended their control from Gbara over the Igbomina country.<sup>13</sup>

The Nupe raids became particularly pronounced under three notable Nupe kings. Etsu Jibrilu (1744–1759); Maijia II (1769–1777) and Ma'azu (1759–1769, 1787–

1795). Under Etsu Jibrilu, the people of Oba were dislodged from their settlement at Oba Igbo, Ora, Oke Ode and Oro Ago were conquered and subjected to tributary status. The wars of 1769–1778 were however the most extensive and most severe. They were chiefly perpetrated by Maijia II. This stormy leader of Nupeland, with his immense force of cavalry fighters razed through Igbominaland. He stormed the Olusin's town of Igbole, ravaged the town and set it on fire. The villages of the Oniwo were burnt down. Oba was again dislodged from its newly settled site at Oba Ofaro. Odo Eku, a newly founded settlement was deserted by its inhabitants. Ijara and Iji did not escape this Nupe attack. Only Oke Onigbin, Edidi, and Ala, not directly situated on Maijia's path, seemed to have escaped this Nupe thrust. The town of Kanko (Oro) was destroyed.

The *Olupo* of Ajase, Dalla II was killed in another raid by Etsu Ma'azu. His capital town Bagidi was destroyed and a greater percentage of its inhabitants taken as slaves. The Orangun's town of Yara was also burnt down.<sup>14</sup>

Some new settlements emerged founded by the displaced inhabitants of these towns and resulting in new political configurations. Thus Ila Orangun emerged out of the ruins of Yara; while from the ruins of Kanko emerged nine villages known as Ekunmesan Oro. Besides the *Olupo* and the *Oloro* of Oro seemed to have had their image boosted as they were several times forced to aid the Nupe in raiding the Ebira, Akoko, Iyagba and even other Igbomina countries.<sup>15</sup> Although the Nupe raids were, as Michael Mason described them, 'smash and grab' operations with little consideration to 'long-term exploitation',<sup>16</sup> they continued well into the 19th century when the Fulani conquest was super-imposed on Igbominaland.

The advent of the Fulani into Igbomina, was an aftermath of the *coup d'état* against Afonja in C.1823 and the extent of the power of the Fulani Jihadist in Ilorin<sup>17</sup>. Thenceforth, particularly after 1830, Ilorin forces, led by *Balogun* Ali Gambari and Ajia Gaju, systematically subjugated Igbomina settlements. Already severely weakened and scattered by the preceding Nupe onslaughts, the Igbomina could not put up any strong resistance to the Fulani incursion. The *Orangun*, who put up some serious resistance, had his town burnt down and himself taken captive to Ilorin. The subsequent submission of the *Olupo* of Ajase, then the most powerful Igbomina ruler, discouraged any other attempt at resisting the Fulani.<sup>18</sup>

Fast on the heels of the Fulani came the Ibadan in the late 1840s. Passing through Otun, in the Ekiti country, they conquered most of Igbomina from Omu-Aran through Oro and Esie to Oke Ode in the extreme north, and stationed their Ajele there.<sup>19</sup> But Ibadan, did not find it easy to subjugate the Igbomina. Her attempt to take Oro Ago was effectively repulsed. The Oro Ago warriors stationed themselves in naturally fortified positions on and between rock outposts and, at the approach of Ibadan forces, threw heavy rocks and stones behind which they unleashed on the Ibadan invaders a steady hail of poisoned arrows.<sup>20</sup> In many other Igbomina villages there were traditions of resistance to Ibadan conquest. Exasperated by such intransigence, Ibadan took to total or almost total destruction of the... Igbomina town involved.<sup>21</sup> Ilorin reacting swiftly to the Ibadan attempt to dislodge her from her imperial hold on the Igbomina and Ekiti countries, put up a stiff resistance and the two had to do battle inconclusively for many years.<sup>22</sup>

Ibadan raids and attacks became intensified throughout the 1850s and the 1860s making life very difficult, insecure and unpredictable. They became so persistent and

so disturbing that many people deserted their homeland for better fortified and more securely protected settlements. The people of Isin for example found their way to Ogba Irobi, an inaccessible, securely hidden and forested gorge on the extreme northern fringe of their homeland. Here they lived precariously together, though each village settled in clearly distinct units, maintaining their independent identity. Life at Ogba Irobi was a haphazard one. Not many intended it to be permanent but most looked eagerly forward to when the turmoil that necessitated the mass emigration would end so that they could return to their homeland. No centralised government was formed. They were at Ogba Irobi for about 15 years, trooping home again in the 1860s when a period of relative peace settled on the land.<sup>23</sup> The inhabitants of Ile-Ire, Ora and Agunjin areas flocked to the military ruler of Oke-Ode for protection.<sup>24</sup> Oko, a new town that arose out of the exigencies of this period, was made up of refugees from the Ekiti towns of Isan, Apa, Otun and Igbomina towns of Ila and Isanlu, who were fleeing from their battered towns.<sup>25</sup>

It is no surprise therefore, that following the outbreak of the Kiriji War in 1878, the Igbomina led by Prince Adeyale of Ila joined the Ekitiparapo to fight against Ibadan. The other Igbomina under Ilorin's influence joined the Ilorin army to fight against Ibadan. The defeat of the confederacy and the death of Adeyale in the Jalumi War nearly spelt doom for Igbominaland. Balogun Ajayi Ogboriefon who led the Ibadan army decided to suppress the Ibadan enemies once and for all. In the process, Ila, Ora, Ilofa and Omu-Aran (all in Igbomina) Erinmope and Gogo (in Ekiti) were subdued and conquered. When at Ekan several Ibadan soldiers perished from eating poisoned food, Ogboriefon resolved to conquer the Igbomina totally and was only deterred by a recall from Ibadan.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile the dislodged inhabitants of Ekan, Ila, Ilofa and Omu-Aran fled from their towns to Ajo located on the more naturally fortified land of Oro Ago for protection. Here at Ajo, a military force was established and commanded by the Esinkin Olomu, Aluko, to protect their newly founded settlement against external aggression.<sup>27</sup> The *Orangun* of Ila with a large number of his people fled to take refuge in the Igbomina village of Omupo where he remained till the signing of the 1886 Peace Treaty.<sup>28</sup> This however did not mean the end of Igbomina participation in the Kiriji War as many Igbomina warriors severally and in groups found their way to the confederate camp at Otun and later at Imesi-Ile. In spite of the 1886 treaty, the state of crises was not removed from Igbomina until the military intervention in 1896, by Captain Bower.<sup>29</sup>

### Consequences

The Nupe onslaught, the Ilorin and Ibadan conquests and raids were not just important because of the ruins they caused, but more because of the profoundly lasting social, political and military re-organisation consequent upon them. Probably at no time in the history of the Igbomina was their survival so severely tried and threatened as it was during the turbulent era of insecurity between c.1750 and c.1897. Their way of life was drastically altered. When there was no sense or hope of success in resisting, they preferred to 'pack and flee' rather than submit to their external aggressors. Their flight in the face of Nupe and Ibadan invasions was, in a sense, a form of resistance not only to enslavement but to external domination. This 19th century crisis and its 18th century antecedents, plunged Igbomina society into frantic flux of social, economic and



political instability, so pervasive and enduring that over a century later, C.S. Burnet after a tour of parts of Igbomina, could still declare that since the Fulani invasion, the area had been 'somewhat unsettled'.<sup>30</sup> In fact so great was the physical dislocation that by 1900, no Igbomina village was on its pre-18th century site. The constant change of settlement and movement of people also occasioned considerable intermingling of Igbomina people. There was overall population redistribution in the whole region. New towns were founded while the surviving ones were continuously augmented by migrants and refugees from all over Yorubaland. Ile-Ire and Oke Ode region suffered a loss of population while Isin, Irese, Oro and Ipo area witnessed rapid population expansion.<sup>31</sup>

A number of Igbomina states suffered considerable decline from the turbulence of this period. Aun, a flourishing, large and walled settlement in north-eastern Igbomina was destroyed early in the 19th century. Its inhabitants to escape annihilation, fled towards northern Igbomina where they established a new town, Share, on the Igbomina-Nupe borderland.<sup>32</sup> Refugees of war from Ile-Ire district of Igbomina fled to Ekiti country where they established a new settlement, Erinmope. Here they strove to maintain their Igbomina character, but over the years they have been culturally assimilated into Ekiti society.<sup>33</sup> The Orangun kingdom of Ila was especially affected by the upheavals of these years. His capital town of Yara was destroyed and thereafter he was continually harassed. W.H. Clarke who visited Ila in 1858 left us a pathetic account of the state of the 'monarch of Igbomina' when he wrote *inter alia*:

If there is a being that deserves our pity and sympathy it is the unfortunate one whom the ravages of time have reduced from opulence and power to a state of poverty and penury. Such seemed to be the condition of the monarch of Igbomina. Whatever the country and capital may have been in its palmy days, there are marks sufficiently evident to prove that those days are no more, that the power of royalty is lost and the kingdom exists only in name.<sup>34</sup>

There occurred new forms of political experimentation and arrangements. Villages began to ally with one another for joint defence and security. The traditional base of authority had to expand since the old ruling class had to share power with other men, particularly military men, brought into prominence by the vicissitudes of the 19th century. In certain cases these new men took over power and seized the initiatives in the scheme of things of the period. In Isin, the *Olusin* of Isanlu's military prowess and his connection with Ile-Ife must have enhanced his status; his ability on occasions to hold his own against the Fulani and Ibadan invaders must have encouraged the people to flock to him for protection. A line from the preserved *orile* of Isanlu confirms the fact of their warlike past:

*'Isanlu-Yeye: Omo ajo k'ogun'*

Literally it means 'Isanlu people: children who dance into war.' As the other settlements were broken up, they came to join the *Olusin*. Isanlu grew and expanded. Gradually the *Olusin* emerged as the paramount ruler over the others who became subordinate to him. The descendants of two of the absorbed settlements that were older than Isanlu itself were given the chance to ascend to the *Olusin* throne. While the three others could not succeed, they had their paramount rulers recognised and brought into the *Olusin's* inner

Council of Chiefs. Having secured his supremacy over the six villages of Isanlu, the *Olusun* thereafter extended his influence gradually to cover the whole of Isinland.<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, in Irese-Igbomina, new foci of political authority also emerged. The earliest Yoruba settlements in Irese were Obin, Adanla and Oke Emo. The headship of Irese was rotated between these three groups. Igbaja was not established until about the reign of the seventh king of Irese. The founder of Igbaja, probably known as *Elese* Adiyefon, was reputed to be a warrior sent by an *Alaafin* to establish an outpost against the Nupe who were making repeated incursions into his domains. The *Elese's* martial ability, his large following and connection with the *Alaafin* of Oyo made him to become accepted as a military leader among the other Irese group of settlements. The constant state of war in the 18th and 19th centuries paved the way for the eventual ascendancy of Igbaja over the other and older settlements. In the course of the wars of the 19th century, military and political leadership shifted from Obin and Adanla to Igbaja. Before long, the title *Elese* became the supreme title of the Irese ruler with the people of Igbaja the sole successor to that title and the rotational system stopped. Consequently at Adanla, the institution of *Elerin* emerged while at Obin the *Olobin* became the village head. Oke Emo was absorbed into Igbaja. All these village heads however became subject to the *Elese* at Igbaja who had become the paramount ruler in Ireseland exercising authority over the original four settlements of Igbaja, Obin, Adanla and Oke-Emo and five others established mainly by war-refugees in the first half of the 19th century. These were Ofarese, Gogo, Pee, Ogbe, Ikeku and Para-Oyo. However, by the end of the 19th century, as a result of constant wars Gogo, Pee, Ogbe, and Ikeku were broken up and the inhabitants assimilated into Igbaja. During the reign of Abidolu, the 16th *Elese*, the territorial influence of the *Elese* had extended as far as River Osin near Ajase to the south and as far as Oke Ode in the east.<sup>36</sup>

In Oro-Ago, the process of socio-political transformation was similar. By the beginning of the 18th century, there were several autonomous settlements in the Esisa country. These included Oke Ayia, Oganyin, Aiyetoro, Isaoye, Omugo, Iraye, Oke Baba, Oke Mure, Okerunwon (under Olorunwon or Lord of Okerunwon), Okewa, Okeluworo and Awu founded by Nupe migrants who introduced elements of Nupe culture into Oro Ago. Each of these settlements jealously guarded its independence until the crises of the 19th century shook them out of their state of political particularism. The external threats initially occasioned a military confederation among the various states. However, as the military pressures became heightened the alliance developed into a cohesive political union. The leader of the Ajagun group traditionally reputed and deified for their earlier military achievements emerged as the paramount ruler to be assisted by chiefs selected from the other groups.<sup>37</sup> In Oke Ode, Ora and Ile Ire districts, the ruler of Oke Ode who had offered protection to the others during the war years was accepted as the military leader of the people thus overshadowing in importance the rulers of Ora and Owa Onire who hitherto had had the pre-eminence over the others.<sup>38</sup>

There also occurred a certain militarisation of Igbomina society. Walls and trenches were built round the towns. Various intelligence and surveillance systems were evolved to cope with the insecurity of these decades. Series of new military titles came into being, while the old ones assumed new significance. These were the *Ihare* and *Ologun* groups of war chiefs in Iwo and Oke Aba; the *Esinkin*, *Balogun* and *Elemoso* war chiefs in Omu-Aran, Owu, Isanlu, Oke Onigbin and Igbaja. These chiefs became prominent

and powerful in state affairs. One of such at Oke Onigbin, popularly known as Amowoerurabaka, usurped power early in the 19th century. He reigned autocratically for several years and sold several of his people into slavery.<sup>39</sup> Another was Aiyemoro from Owu, whose martial ardour earned him the title of *Esinkin Olusin* and supreme commander of Isin irregulars.<sup>40</sup> Other notable ones who distinguished themselves one way or another were *Elemoso Gudugudu* from Ijara, *Balogun Oderinlo Atanbati* from Igbaja who was said to have dealt mercilessly with the people of Otun and Erin Ile in certain wars and *Esinkin Olomu Aluko* from Omu Aran, who in 1879 spearheaded the formation of Iyangba confederate army and had to be physically dislodged from Ajo in 1896 by a military contingent commanded by Captain R.L. Bower.<sup>41</sup>

A major revolutionary consequence of the crises of this era was the rise to pre-eminence of Ilorin itself. Ilorin was originally an Igbomina village under Oyo. The revolt of Afonja and the independence of Ilorin under the Fulani Jihadists radically changed the socio-political character of the Igbomina region in and around Ilorin. The dialect, the political system and the socio-cultural organisation of this region which included Ilorin, Idofin, Afon and Iponrin changed in a way remarkably different from the other Igbomina and Yoruba people. Today, this region, beside being on Igbomina land and having a tradition of being part of Igbomina in the past, has become socially, economically, and politically integrated into the Ilorin society. Thus the 19th century crises transformed Ilorin from an insignificant Igbomina village to the most dominant centre of power in the region.<sup>42</sup> The Fulani of Ilorin beside detaching large area of Igbomina from the main subgroup and giving it a new character, also affected the region in another way. Following the Fulani conquest, several individuals and groups from Ilorin, mostly Fulani, flocked into Igbomina land where they established permanent settlements. This proliferation of settlements became pronounced in the second half of the 19th century as more Fulani and Yoruba farmers and adventurers fanned out in different directions establishing new settlements all over the region. These new settlements were generally small, both in size and in population and without highly centralised political systems. Throughout the 19th century however, they remained in a constant state of flux.<sup>43</sup>

The conquest of Igbomina by the Fulani Jihadists from Ilorin and Lafiagi did not result in the religious conversion of the people. There is no evidence to indicate that either the people or their rulers abandoned their traditional religion for Islam during this period. Besides, the Nupe-Fulani conquerors appeared to be more interested in the economic and political gains of their conquest than in any forceful conversion to Islam. Many of the rulers paid tacit allegiance to Islam while they continued with their Pre-Jihadist ways of life. The acceptance of the Muslim turban by Igbomina rulers such as the *Olupo* of Ajase and the *Elese* of Igbaja did not indicate a religious conversion of these rulers or of their people. According to H.O. Danmole, 'This may be regarded (merely) as an exercise of political authority rather than a determination to convert the *Elese* as there is no other exact evidence to suggest that it was a conversion ceremony. The (turbaning) ceremony was the instrument used by the emirate authorities to signify the acceptance by a people of Ilorin rule.'<sup>44</sup> And in any case, the pervasive state of insecurity of the 19th century and the excesses of Ilorin agents and representatives did not work to the advantage of Islamisation in the region. Allegiance to traditional religion remained very strong. When, for instance, in the 1860s an *Oloro Ayigunsi*, in



a bid to please the Emir of Ilorin, adopted the religion of Islam against the wish of his people, he was deposed and exiled. A new *Oloro* committed to the sustenance of traditional religion came to the throne.<sup>45</sup>

Further, in the face of the crises of these decades, the traditional religious system of the people showed a remarkable resilience and power of adaptation. In almost every case the traditional religion was strengthened. In Isin, the *Agbasin* festival, traditionally the exclusive preserve of the *Olusin* and celebrated only in Isanlu became, sometimes in the late 19th century, a general and an annual festival encompassing almost the whole of Isinland. To all the villages which had come under the *Olusin's* protection and influence, the *Agbasin* became the symbol of their unity and the *Olusin* himself the personification of that union. The *Agbasin* like the other deities in the region was expected to protect the people from the misfortunes attendant on the 19th century crises.<sup>46</sup> Similar developments took place at Iwo with regard to the Awoji deity, at Ala with regard to Agbalu, at Oro with regard to Olofin and at Oro Ago with regard to Epa and Odufon deities and festivals.<sup>47</sup>

In terms of the economy, the 19th century crises also occasioned some changes. Agriculture remained the basis of the society's economy, though it was hard hit by the state of insecurity created by the constant Fulani-Ibadan raids, pillaging and attacks. Trade also suffered though it did not entirely stop. It became necessary for traders to move together in large groups escorted by armed men from one market town to another. W.H. Clarke who visited Igbomina in 1858 gave an account that bears witness to the efflorescence of agriculture, manufacturing and trade within Igbomina during these crises-ridden years. After declaring that though 'royalty had lost much of its glory and power by the tyranny of more powerful neighbours', he went on to state:

"cotton growth (in this region) certainly surpasses anything to be seen in all Yorubaland. The cultivation of this staple production is so extensive or so exclusive and the manufacturing department on such a large scale—comparatively—the traders from Ijesa, Ilorin, Yoruba (Oyo) and Abeokuta flock to Ila for the purchasing of cheap cloths."<sup>48</sup>

Thus, in spite of the state of crises there was an expansion in the growth of cotton, which was accompanied by the development of cotton manufacturing industries in different parts of Igbomina. Oro was noted especially for cotton manufacture. Here in the midst of the 19th century crises, weavers experimented with a variety of cotton cloth. Initially the commonest was *Aso Oloboro*, an indigenous cloth which was very coarse in stuff and of pale white colour. This was phased out during the second half of the 19th century, since buyers at Ibadan, Ilorin and Ekiti refused to buy it at profitable prices. New varieties such as *Etakete*, *Ijiwosa Kutupu* and *Keke* were introduced. All these were relatively soft and of brighter colours when compared with *Oloboro*. Besides, new styles of weaving were also copied from the Nupe, a number of who, in the course of their conquests, had settled in Igbomina. The Oro weavers from about 1850 started producing many varieties of Nupe cloths such as *Eleyamesan* and *Epala*. These were produced mainly for markets at Bida, Egga, Patigi and the environs.<sup>49</sup> Iron-smelting and blacksmithing industries were also affected. In the Ile Ire region, famous for their iron industries, the craft suffered a drastic decline.<sup>50</sup> In other places, however, the manufacturing continued. In addition to hoes, cutlasses and household utensils, the production of articles such as guns, spears and arrows increased in the face of the exigencies of the 19th century. For instance, the Oro Ago people having learnt the art

of spear throwing from the Nupe took to its production on a large scale.<sup>31</sup>

To the turbulent events of this period could also be ascribed the unification of Igbomina people. Prior to the 19th century, the nature of their political existence was to a great extent, that of mutual co-existence and independence. As Hogben and Kirk-Greene noted, the Igbomina, with 'their numerous leaders, were never a very cohesive unit'.<sup>32</sup> This lack of cohesiveness, or of any concerted efforts to unite against their common enemies rendered Igbomina weak and thus vulnerable to the Nupe, Fulani and Ibadan who made swift and devastating thrusts into their land. Gradually, however, battered by the Nupe, conquered by the Fulani and continually harrassed by the Ibadan, they began to submerge their agelong particularism and to unite in more cohesive forms. In several cases, military alliances transformed into political unions. Nevertheless the 19th century exigencies did not succeed in totally removing the people's local particularism. No central political system encompassing the whole Igbomina emerged. Furthermore, Igbomina had been truncated into three: the south-western section under the Fulani based at Ilorin; the north-eastern section under the Fulani headquartered at Lafiagi; while Ila remained precariously under Ibadan's influence.<sup>33</sup> The efforts of the Igbomina to free themselves from the Fulani hegemony and later to join their 'kith and kin' in the south created turbulent political crises during the 20th century, in spite of the British presence.<sup>34</sup>

The Fulani conquests had been consolidated with the setting up of imperial administrations by the two imperial masters. Each appointed representatives over the respective areas of Igbomina she controlled. For instance, the Fulani representatives or District Heads at Oke Ode, Igbaja and Omu-Isanlu were known as *Shaaba Maiyaki* and *Ajia* respectively. The fief holders usually resided in the capital, such as Ilorin, leaving his representatives or agents in the Districts to carry on the local administration. The District Head also had his representatives in virtually all the towns and villages in the district. He exercised his power through these agents. Local traditions prevalent in Igbomina remembered the Fulani District Head system for its oppressiveness and the hardship it brought upon the people. Well documented is the presence of numerous representatives of the District Heads in the region. In some villages they are said to have been as many as twenty, allegedly living and preying on the people, and committing series of atrocities. Their nefarious activities and licentiousness made the Fulani rule more intolerable and unacceptable. Writing on the Igbomina area in 1912, E.C. Duff, the Resident for Ilorin Province reported that before the advent of British rule the District Head and his agents

were a terror to the lives of the people...

No one was safe from them . . .

They behave with perfect impunity, causing great misery and discontent among the people.<sup>35</sup>

In Ila, under Ibadan's rule, the story was not different. Clarke after noting the 'sad and melancholy' state of the *Orangun*, described the Ibadan *Ajele* he met at Ila in 1858 as being 'not only the lion but the tyrant of the place'.<sup>36</sup> It is not surprising that in the Ekitiparapo revolt of 1878, the reaction against Ibadan agents was most pronounced at Ila. According to available evidence, not less than 1,000 agents of Ibadan were massacred in Ila alone.<sup>37</sup>

The coming of the British, in 1897, did not put and end to the Fulani hegemony in

Igbominaland. In fact, it was the establishment of British colonial rule that allowed for the effective consolidation of Fulani imperialism. Since the British were determined to rule through intermediaries and especially through the pre-British traditional political system, they readily accepted the pre-colonial system as a ready model on which to superimpose their own system of indirect rule.<sup>58</sup> Thus the traditional basis of imperial organisation of society within Ilorin and Lafiagi emirates in pre-colonial times, as represented by the District Head system, was retained by the British with only minor modifications. The demand, made by prominent Igbomina rulers in 1900, to be constituted into an autonomous division or province directly responsible to the British was dismissed as not only being unrealistic but impracticable. However, the Igbomina, throughout the colonial period did not fail to utilise every opportunity to demonstrate their aversion to the new pattern of political arrangements.

## Conclusion

By virtue of its location in the Nigerian middle belt and as a frontier Yoruba region, Igbomina became an area of plural cultural interactions and in the crises-ridden decades of the 18th and 19th centuries, it became a battle ground between the great imperial masters — the Nupe, Fulani and Ibadan — where their military, political and diplomatic rivalries were played out. The Igbomina, by the nature of their socio-political organisation and their military system, were in no way prepared for the role their location and the game of 19th century power politics had foisted upon them. Nevertheless they demonstrated a remarkable resilience and capacity for adaptation in the face of the wars and the far reaching socio-political transformation of the society which resulted from them.

War has been described as diplomacy by other means. Generally, war had often acted as an instrument of socio-political change. The 19th century wars in the Yoruba countries had far reaching and revolutionary consequences on Igbomina. War became the 'progenitor and accelerator of change.'<sup>59</sup> The Igbomina, like most of the other Yoruba groups, did not remain the same after these wars. The present shape and character of Igbomina society cannot be divorced from the wars of the 19th century. Understanding the wars of this century and their consequences means understanding the nature and organisation of Igbomina society of today.<sup>60</sup>



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## Chapter Seven

# Iwo: The Case Study of A Non-Belligerent Yoruba State in the 19th Century

A.G. Adebayo

The extent and frequency of the involvement of different Yoruba states and kingdoms in the 19th century was varied. Ibadan was the archetype of a belligerent state; and was in a different class as far as the 19th century wars and state formation were concerned.<sup>1</sup> Right from the time of its founding in about 1830, she was almost always at war in one part of Yorubaland or another. It was Ibadan (jointly with Ijaye, and later singlehandedly) that checked the south and southeast-ward advances of the Ilorin *Jihadists*. It was also Ibadan that stepped into the military vacuum resulting from the final collapse of the Old Oyo Empire;<sup>2</sup> moreso, when the *Alaafin* in New Oyo lacked the military power to hold the remnants of the old empire together. Ibadan did more than preserve the Oyo Empire; by being constantly at war, she extended the frontiers of the empire into areas, hitherto, not covered by the rule of the *Alaafin*.

Next to Ibadan in rank of belligerency were those other states in Yorubaland that needed war for survival. These states were often battle-ready, although they might not be actually at war.<sup>3</sup> Some of them, like Ijaye and Abeokuta, were themselves products of large-scale post-war migrations. The latter, especially, was peopled by Egba refugees who had to flee from Ibadan, hitherto one of their several, independent villages, sequel to its establishment as a permanent Oyo camp. Others, like the Ijesa and the Ekiti states<sup>4</sup> were ravaged at various times by Ibadan under the pretext of checking Ilorin expansion and chasing the Muslim *Jihadists* out of eastern Yorubaland.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that no discussion of the 19th century history of Yorubaland could neglect Ibadan. The city and its people played a central role in the affairs of other Yoruba states and kingdoms. Certainly, it is impossible to write a comprehensive history of 19th century Ilorin, Igbomina, Ife, Ijesa, Ekiti as well as Egba, Ijebu and Ijaye without reference to Ibadan. This central position which Ibadan occupied owed much to the fact that she was belligerent throughout. It had two consequences. First, historians often neglected those city-states and kingdoms that had nothing to do with those revolutionary changes and turbulence which Ibadan epitomised. Thus, such communities as Ondo and Iwo have been virtually neglected in the writings. Secondly, it became popularised that the 19th century was a period of wars and violence: nothing else seemed to matter.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the wars turned out to be transient, while it was the peaceful changes like missionary activities, Islamisation and legitimate trade that had more enduring effect.

In this chapter, the might of Ibadan and its centrality to 19th century history of Yorubaland are not held in doubt. Neither is it denied that it was more prestigious in

the 19th century to be belligerent, whether one won or lost the war. Rather, this chapter seeks to explain, through the Iwo experience, that some states were honourably non-belligerent and neutral. In addition, it seeks to evaluate the consequences resulting from such an incongruous position of non-belligerency in a general condition of war.

### Why was Iwo Non-Belligerent

Iwo was non-belligerent throughout the 19th century for three main reasons. First, the kingdom had no standing army. Palace traditions<sup>4</sup> in Iwo can not recall any period before the 19th century when Iwo entered the field against any foe. In fact, rather than tell of a battle fought, won or lost, by Iwo, the traditions tell of Iwo vacating several of its earlier sites because of attacks of more powerful states and mercenary groups. Not only was Iwo incapable of offensive attacks, indeed the kingdom often could not defend itself.

Akinyele records that Telu and his entourage, after leaving Ile-Ife around the 11th century, settled in a nameless location near Ile-Ife where they were harried by Ijesa raiders.<sup>7</sup> Iwo traditions further tell that Telu's group tried several other locations until they got to Ogundigbaro,<sup>8</sup> located around the confluence of rivers Oba and Osun (probably near the present day Asejire dam) in the mid-16th century. They were chased out of this place in the third year (the third wet season) by flood and reptiles. These foes they could not fight! Their next location was *Igbo-Orita* which they occupied for about one century before being driven out by slave-raiders (*Sunmoni*) and small pox.<sup>9</sup> They settled in the present day Iwo in the 17th century.

Since their settlements, Iwo traditions cannot record any war of expansion fought against their neighbours in the Epo forest. Rather than stand back and fight, they had preferred to flee. The security of the present site derived from two main factors — one geographic, the other political. The geographical security came from River Oba (then about eight kilometres south, west and north of (Iwo) whose annual flooding often kept marauders out. The political security came from the recognition of the might of the *Alaafin* by the *Oluwo* in the 17th century shortly after settling in its present site. It was said that the *Alaafin* did not attack Iwo; but the *Oluwo* felt the might of Oyo when *Alaafin* Obalokun carried his wars of expansion to Ijanna in Egbado,<sup>10</sup> Iwo's other neighbour in the Epo forest. Thereafter, Iwo began paying homage to Oyo in return for the *Alaafin's* protection. More significantly, all subsequent *Oluwo*-elects had to receive the *Alaafin's* approval before installation.<sup>11</sup>

Palace traditions in Iwo record, with pride, that Iwo was never captured: *Ogun ko ja ko ko Iwo ri*. But then, no evidence is given that Iwo ever fought to capture anybody. Much more revealing of the pacific nature of Iwo is the verse in the town's *oriki* stating that it (Iwo) had no standing army, rather it relied on the services of slaves for security purposes:

*Iwo ko ni ilekun,  
Iwo ko ni kokoro:  
Eru wewe ni won fi n sole.*

Iwo has no doors  
Iwo has no keys:  
Slaves were used in guarding the town



With no military background, therefore, the kingdom chose the path of peace and neutrality, even though individual citizens were free to participate in the various wars.

Second, Iwo was non-belligerent because she was not attacked throughout the 19th century. Unlike the Ekiti states which were attacked several times by Ibadan, Iwo had no experience of war hitting its walls. This is not unrelated to the political arrangement of Yorubaland in the late 18th and early 19th century. Simply put, it had to do with the protection offered Iwo by the *Alaafin* until the collapse of Oyo, and thereafter by Ibadan. In addition, that Iwo was not attacked in the period owed much to the diplomacy of the various *Oluwo* and his reliability as an ally. For, in spite of the political and constitutional troubles that engulfed Oyo, the *Oluwo* was still loyal to the *Alaafin*.

The Reverend Samuel Johnson records that Iwo offered *Alaafin* Maku political asylum when he failed in his attack of Iwere. 'For shame, he did not return to Oyo till the *Oyo Mesi* sent word to him that 'he should not think of removing the seat of government to Iwo, or else why did he remain there?'<sup>12</sup> In addition, Akinjogbin and Ayandele record the effort of the *Oluwo* and other rulers in the Epo province in organising the leaderless corps of *Ogo Were* (the jackal) against Afonja in loyalty to the crown.<sup>13</sup>

When the collapse of Oyo was imminent, an uncontrollable wave of migrants pressed to the south. Iwo received a fair share of these migrants, and this made the *Oluwo* more interested in his immediate surroundings. Thus, when the Owu War began, he gave his support to the allies (the Ife, Ijebu and Oyo refugees), against his rival, the *Olowu*. With his most formidable neighbour ravaged, the *Oluwo* became the only ancient ruler of considerable importance in the former Epo province capable of boasting of a beaded crown. However, because of the age-old absence of a military power, Iwo could not play the role that suddenly devolved on it. It was left for the new settlement, Ibadan, to fill this position; and the *Oluwo* acknowledged Ibadan's military superiority.

In this new balance of power, therefore, Iwo the peaceful, quickly identified with Ibadan the belligerent. Thus, the latter helped in chasing out Ilorin *Jihadists* who were said to have sacked a number of villages in Iwo. Iwo traditions do not record what the *Oluwo* paid Ibadan in return for these external security services. While they could not have been rendered for free, the payment was probably not in the form of the traditional homage. For, Ibadan never stationed an *Ajele* in Iwo. The payment was possibly in the giving of political advice and classified military information which only the *Oluwo* Lamuye (c.1858–c.1906) as a peaceful, non-belligerent old man could have access to.

In fact, on one occasion the *Oluwo*'s advice was indispensable to the military leaders at Ibadan. This was in 1878 at about the beginning of the Kiriji War. According to Kemi Morgan,<sup>14</sup> *Aare* Latosa heard the news that the Ekitiparapo troops were about to attack Ikirun and ordered *Seriki* Ajayi Osungbekun to lead a small force to defend the town:

On the way to Ikirun, *Seriki* Ajayi Osungbekun and his troops passed through Iwo and they went to pay their respects to *Oluwo* (Lamuye). When they arrived at the *Oluwo*'s palace, and he saw the small number of soldiers being sent to defend Ikirun, he laughed and said to the *Seriki*. 'And what do you intend to do? The Ekitiparapo troops are very many; it will not take them a day before they kill all of you.' The *Oluwo* therefore sent an urgent message to *Aare* Latosa at Ibadan telling him about the strength of the Ekitiparapo troops and asking him to send reinforcement to *Seriki* Ajayi Osungbekun. *Aare* Latosa

acted on the *Oluwo's* advice and sent more troops to join the *Seriki* at Iwo.<sup>15</sup>

Iwo thus remained non-belligerent throughout the century, relying, like New Oyo, on Ibadan to fight its wars. Third, Iwo was non-belligerent because *Oluwo* Lamuye was a peaceful, old man.<sup>16</sup> Like all his predecessors, Lamuye was not warlike. All traditions remember him as an old man and the longest reigning *Oba* of Iwo. He ascended the throne in about 1858 when Ibadan was in its prime. Being peace loving and old, and Iwo itself having no permanent army, Lamuye made no effort to participate in any of the wars being waged at the time. Although he had war chiefs on his cabinet, it is difficult to tell if he ever used them. It is said that Iwo contributed contingents to Ibadan's troops as was the tradition of all kingdoms that owed allegiance to Oyo. Nevertheless, it is difficult to tell if these contingents were Lamuye's official contribution or the individual decisions of the warriors. As will be shown shortly, a number of warriors who left Iwo for Ibadan achieved distinctions. Lamuye died in 1906 as a peaceful ruler, straddling the Ibadan wars and the British peace.

### Consequences of Non-Belligerency

The first major consequence of Iwo's non-belligerency was that the warlike members of the kingdom grew restive. This group of warriors and chiefs were mostly a part of the recent immigrants who had been used to (or seen) war in their former places of abode. The group wanted Iwo to be like several other 19th century Yoruba states; and spared no occasion to denounce the peaceful attitude adopted by the *Oluwo*. Quite appropriately, the members of the group directed their annoyance and frustration against the *Oluwo* especially Lamuye (c.1858–c.1906). They were said to have employed the services of bards and drummers to sing their praises and denounce Lamuye as a coward.<sup>17</sup> In addition, they organised armed bands to molest Lamuye's wives on their daily trips to fetch drinking water from a spring near Oore hill.<sup>18</sup> These cases of molestation forced Lamuye to organise armed escorts for his wives.

The most violent demonstration of the frustration of the warrior elements in Iwo's population was the civil strike that occurred shortly after Lamuye's ascension to the throne. Also called 'Ali-Iwo's rebellion', the strife occurred around c.1863–c. 1865 and was a conspiracy against Lamuye. Although there were others who shared his feelings and backed him in this rebellion,<sup>19</sup> the major plotter was *Balogun* Ali. It is not certain what he sought to achieve by the plot, but palace traditions claim, with some exaggeration, that Ali wanted to unseat the *Oluwo* Lamuye. Even this tradition cannot confirm whether or not Ali wanted to be king instead.

What is clear is that Ali had a relationship to the *Oluwo* through his mother, although his father was an immigrant from Ogbomoso.<sup>20</sup> In addition, he was made *Balogun* by *Oluwo* Ogunmakinde Anide (c. 1820–1858). Anide was unique among 19th century *Oluwo* for the fact that he was a powerful hunter. Although traditions can not recall a war which he led or fought, Ogunmakinde achieved fame through his gun which had a brass handle and earned the nickname *Anide-n'idi-ibon*. Ali respected Anide and served him well as the *Oluwo*. He was, however, a proud man, and it was said that he swore not to serve the cowardly son, Lamuye. This claim has a ring of truth, for Ali's description given by W.M. Clark in 1856 conjures up the picture of a man 'six feet tall, well proportioned, light coloured (whose) power was evidently felt through the whole city.'<sup>21</sup>

Ali had revolutionary ideas imbibed from Ibadan during some of his visits. He had the intention of transforming the political system of Iwo on a par with practices in Ibadan. By his calculations, if maternal relationship was not enough to earn him the crown, he could still achieve his end through promotion from the *Balogun* title. Traditions collected from the *Balogun* family in Iwo, however, relate that Ali was not that ambitious; and that he became incensed against the *Oluwo* because of Lamuye's assumption of religious leadership which used to be Ali's.<sup>21</sup> It is true that Lamuye was a Muslim, and on ascension to the throne, he became the leader of the muslim community, a position that Ali had occupied in the reign of the non-muslim Anide.

It seems that the first round of the strike was won in about 1863 by Ali and his other conspirators. They succeeded in intercepting *Oluwo*'s messengers going to Oke-Osun to collect tributes from the village heads. Ali thereafter sent his own messengers who collected the tribute for him. Being militarily incapable of checking Ali, Lamuye did nothing. His chance, however, came about a year later when both Ali and Akinboro were busy in faraway battlefields fighting on the side of Ibadan. Ali was at the Kutuje War while Akinboro was at the Ijaye War. Lamuye chose this time to take action through his loyal warriors. Among them were Akingbade, son of Osunwusi, one of the Offa immigrants who had settled in Iwo<sup>22</sup> Odutoyeje and Akinlusi. After their success in quelling the strike and scattering the remnants of the plotters, Lamuye honoured these loyal warriors with chieftaincy titles. Akingbade became the *Jagun*, Odutoyeje the *Olukosi*, and Akinlusi the *Olukotun*.

One of the consequences of the strike for Ali and Akinboro was that they never returned to Iwo. This was as much the result of the *Oluwo*'s diplomacy as the warriors' contempt for Lamuye's peace posture. Traditions claim that the *Oluwo* appealed to *Basorun* Ogunmola, himself an emigrant from Fesu, one of the surrounding villages of Iwo, to keep Ali in Ibadan after the war (so that he would not take reprisals). Ogunmola then advised Ali not to return to Iwo, that 'humble town' which did not befit a man of his rank.<sup>23</sup> Ali agreed, and settled down on the land he was given at Agodi. Here, he achieved another feat of starting and completing his buildings in the rainy season. This gave rise to the popular song:

*Ali m'ole e l'ojo o si ro o:  
Ojo weli - weli l'Ali mole.<sup>24</sup>*

Ali built his house and roofed it:  
In the down-pour he built it.

From the preceding account of Ali-Iwo's rebellion, it is possible to come to a couple of conclusions about Yorubaland and politics in the 19th century. The first is that no state was spared in the troubles of the time. Even the peaceful Iwo kingdom had to put up with occasional, violent irruptions from the warrior chieftains. The second is that effort was made to preserve the monarchical system of government, in spite of the incapacity of several monarchs. Indeed, in spite of the fact that Lamuye was weak, he received the assistance of members of the military class in his tribulations. Thus, although the 19th century was a period when valour and bravery mattered, all due respect (or at least acknowledgement) was paid the *oba*.

Another consequence of Iwo's non-belligerency is related to the first. That is, because Iwo was too 'humble' and boring for them, all those who wanted some



adventure emigrated to Ibadan where some of them achieved distinction. We have mentioned Ali who agreed not to return to Iwo after the Kutuje War. Others who achieved distinction in Ibadan included *Basorun* Ogunmola from Fesu, *Balogun* Odeinde from Oluponna, *Bale* Orowusi from Ogbagba, *Osi Balogun* Ayorinde from Kuta, and *Bale* Olugbode Oyesile also from Kuta.<sup>25</sup> The implication of their exit from Iwo was that the kingdom lost its bravest men to Ibadan; and this further implied that Iwo could not participate in the wars, being only barely able to ensure internal security.

On the religious side, Iwo's non-participation in the wars ensured the success of Islamic evangelisation and conversion in the kingdom. Iwo is obviously one of the most Islamic of Yoruba towns today; and until the beginning of this century, Christianity had no adherent in the town. It is not clear how the religion of Islam got to Iwo. Palace traditions hold that it came during the reign of Alawusa (c. 1795–c.1820) who was reported as the first Muslim *Oluwo*. The other tradition<sup>26</sup> that points to an earlier period seems to contain greater historical truth, for Alawusa still had to be preached to by another muslim. This tradition traces the coming of Islam to Iwo to one Momodu, an itinerant preacher who settled temporarily in Iwo in the reign of Layilumi (who died about 1750). This preacher was so versed in Islamic tradition and education that Layilumi consulted with him on several occasions and persuaded him to train one of his own children. This prince-trainee was probably Alawusa.

To this already significant Muslim population was added the 19th century immigrants, a large section of which were already Muslims from their former places of abode. These newcomers were attracted to Iwo because it offered peace within which they could practice their religion unhindered. Further conversions were made from among the original inhabitants and non-muslim new-comers. Furthermore, when the Ilorin forces sacked some villages in Iwo, a number of people fled into the city. Their contact with, and capture by the Ilorin, ensured their conversion. This process of migration and conversion continued throughout the century. It was, in fact, accelerated during Lamuye's reign.

By 1856, when Clark visited the town, Iwo was already a Muslim town. The *Ileya* (*Id-il-Kabir*) festival of 1856 recorded by Clark was one of the many in the century during which at 10 O'clock, 'an immense concourse of people densely packed was entering the town through the eastern gate (apparently returning from the praying ground)'<sup>27</sup> This crowd passed into the city, slaughtered their rams and treated themselves to a general dance in the palace later in the evening.

The impact of this success of Islam in Iwo in the 19th century was to further reduce the prospects of Iwo taking the fields against the Fulani in the belief that the Ilorin forces were fighting a *Jihad*, a war to spread the faith. Rather than fight the Fulani, the *Oluwo* chose to remain neutral. This point needs to be qualified by stating that reasons much more responsible for Iwo's non-belligerency than religion have been stated. After all, Latosa the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo*, and head of Ibadan during the Jalumi and Kiriji Wars was also a Muslim.

Perhaps the effect of Islam in Iwo which has endured is the late response of Iwo people to Western education in the 20th century. Seen as Christian education, the Muslim parents in Iwo refused to send their children to schools. Even though the first day school was established in 1918 by the Baptist Mission, and although the Baptist College was transferred from Ogbomoso to Iwo in 1939, Iwo people still snubbed the schools. The need for Western education, in spite of one's religious belief, is just being realised in Iwo. Thus, an indirect effect of the peace garb worn by Iwo in the 19th century was the slowness of the people in responding to Western education.

## Notes and References

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6. This refers to tradition collected from the late Oba Abimbola, S.O., the *Oluwo* of Iwo, on 14 and 21 October, 1978.
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## Chapter Eight

# Military Alliances in Yorubaland in the 19th Century

Dare Oguntomisin .

### Introduction

Yorubaland witnessed a series of internecine wars in the 19th century.<sup>1</sup> Prominent among these were the Owu, the Batedo, the Ijaye and the Ekitiparapo or Kiriji Wars.<sup>2</sup> The issues involved in the wars were wide and diverse; most of them had been examined in some of the existing works on Yoruba history during the period.<sup>3</sup> However, the military alliances which were significant aspects of the wars are yet to be given special attention. Instead, they have often been discussed along with the wars for which they were formed. Though this approach is to some extent, plausible, it does not provide adequate scope for indepth examination of the impact of the alliances and their effects on inter and intra group relations.

Generally, Yoruba kingdoms or towns hardly fought wars alone. For them, wars presented occasions for the formation of new alliances or renewal of old ones. As wars became endemic in the 19th century, military alliances, either for offensive or defensive purposes, became common features of inter-kingdom, inter-town or inter-group relations. Perhaps the most elaborate of the alliances were the Ife-Ijebu alliance against Owu in 1821, the Ijaye-Egba alliance in 1860 and the Ekitiparapo grand alliance against Ibadan in 1878.<sup>4</sup> Some other alliances are less elaborate. Among these are: the coalition of Ibadan and Ijaye against Abeokuta in 1835 and the alliances formed on either sides by Ibadan and Ijaye in the Batedo War c.1844 c.1845.<sup>5</sup> With special reference to the Ife-Ijebu, the Ijaye-Egba and the *Ekitiparapo* alliances, this chapter examines the various motives of the allies and the effect of the 19th century military alliances on warfare and inter and intra-group relations in Yorubaland during the period.

### The Motives of the Allies

Towns or kingdoms joined forces in military operations to win common objectives. But each of the allies had specific motives for the realisation of these objectives. For example the common objective of the Ife-Ijebu allies was the destruction of Owu town but as shown below, each of the allies had different motives for desiring the destruction of the town.

Both the Ife and the Ijebu had specific grievances against the Owu. Owu town is described by Mabogunje and Omer-Cooper as one of the earliest and most important city states in southern Yorubaland.<sup>6</sup> It was the capital of a kingdom bounded in the west by Egba territory, in the north-east by Ife kingdom and in the south-west and south-east by Ijebu and Ondo kingdoms respectively. As soldiers, the Owu were said to be hardy, brave, courageous and adroit in hand-to-hand fighting with long cutlasses

(*agedemgbe*) as their typical weapon.<sup>7</sup> Johnson states that they were noted by their neighbours for hardihood, stubbornness, immorality and haughtiness.<sup>8</sup> These characteristics probably won them the fear and respect of their neighbours.

However, they incurred the anger of their Ife and Ijebu neighbours between c. 1810 and c. 1821 by their political ambition and rash behaviour. Within this period, they attacked a number of Ife towns and took over the control of Apomu, an important market town, under the pretext of carrying out an order from the *Onikoyi* of Ikoyi and *Toyeje* of Ogbomoso, two provincial chiefs in the old Oyo Empire, to prevent Oyo–Yoruba people from being sold into slavery at the Apomu market.<sup>9</sup> The Ife were so enraged by this sudden attack on their territory that they despatched warriors under Sigunsin, their Commander-in-Chief to attack and sack Owu town. The Owu so ruthlessly defeated the Ife expedition at Safirin<sup>10</sup> that the remaining soldiers refused to return home ignominiously. They encamped at Adunbieye in Iwo territory to regroup and await an opportune time to relaunch their attack. While still in a state of latent hostility with the Ife, the Owu incurred the wrath of their Ijebu neighbours in 1821. In this year, an altercation over the sale of alligator pepper, between a pregnant Ijebu woman and an Owu man in the Apomu market led to an outbreak of hostilities between the Owu and the Ijebu. The Ijebu woman was mortally wounded (inadvertently?) by Olugbabi Awalona, the *Akogun* (war chief) of Owu appointed by the *Olowu* (ruler of Owu town) as the market supervisor. In the ensuing affray, the Owu were beaten and driven away from the market by Ijebu traders and Apomu sympathisers. The *Olowu* hastily despatched troops to quell the riot and re-establish his authority in the market. The troops sacked Apomu town, killed many Ijebu traders and looted their goods. To the Ijebu, the action of the Owu market supervisor and the subsequent sacking of Apomu and killing of Ijebu traders were outrageous. They called for retaliation and consequently their king ordered a campaign against Owu town.<sup>11</sup>

The Ife lost no time in seizing this advantage to form an alliance with the Ijebu. The *Oluwo* (ruler of Iwo) probably played an important role in the negotiation leading to the formation of the alliance for, according to Samuel Johnson, "The King of Iwo thereupon advised the Ifes to form an alliance with the Ijebus, who like them, have grievance against Owu."<sup>12</sup> When the alliance was finally formed, an Ijebu force was said to have set out on a march to the north to link up with Ife forces in Iwo territory for a combined attack on Owu.<sup>13</sup>

Owu thus became a common target of the Ife and the Ijebu. But each of the allies wanted the town destroyed for different reasons. The Ijebu wanted to avenge the death of their traders at the Apomu market. The Ife had more fundamental political and economic reasons. First, they wanted to chastise the Owu for attacking some towns in their territory — an attack which the *Ooni* (ruler of Ife kingdom) regarded, with annoyance, as an affront to his sovereignty and the territorial integrity of his kingdom. Second, they wanted to retrieve their military pride lost during their first punitive military expedition against Owu. Third, they wanted to repossess the Apomu market which had been seized by the Owu. The market was an important commercial rendezvous for Ife, Oyo, Ijebu, Owu and other Yoruba people from the interior. Here the Ijebu exchanged their products and the goods which they purchased from the coast for the products of the Yoruba from the interior. Tolls derivable from goods sold in the

market as well as from the caravans entering and moving out of the town made it a valuable source of revenue for the *Ooni*.<sup>14</sup> Its repossession was, for the Ife authorities, a political and economic necessity.

However, in the course of their operation against Owu, the allies were joined by Oyo refugee soldiers fleeing from the war-torn areas of the tottering old Oyo Empire. The motive of these soldiers was totally different from those of the Ijebu and the Ife. They were homeless and jobless foragers and pillagers. They enrolled in large numbers in the Ife-Ijebu allied army not because they had specific grievances against the Owu but because they were fascinated by the possibility of catching booty. The Owu War offered them a means of livelihood.

Spurred by these varied motives, the allies carried their campaign against Owu to its logical conclusion. After a determined and heroic defence of their town, the Owu capitulated. Their town was destroyed.

The Ijaye-Egba alliance was another example. The common objective of the allies was the defeat of Ibadan in the Ijaye War — 1860–1862. As in the case of the Ife-Ijebu alliance, both the Ijaye and the Egba had different motives for desiring to defeat Ibadan in the war.

The principal antagonists in the war were Ibadan and Ijaye, two rival military towns that rose from the ruins of the old Oyo Empire. They were fast-growing capitals of two palatinates into which the rump of the old Oyo had been divided by *Alaafin* Atiba.<sup>15</sup> In the course of their expansion, both Ibadan and Ijaye had had a substantial number of subordinate towns in and outside Oyo-Yorubaland. While Ibadan held political sway in the eastern and north-eastern Yorubaland, Ijaye had strongholds in the west and north-west. The two towns were, indeed, struggling for political supremacy in Yorubaland. Although the specific *causus belli* was the controversy over the succession of Adelu, the *Areemo* (crown prince), to the throne in Oyo in 1859, the two towns had been at the centre of power-politics in Oyo-Yorubaland since the 1840s.<sup>16</sup>

In the light of the above, their wars definitely had to involve the participation of many Oyo-Yoruba towns which were their tributaries. While Ijaye drew support mainly from the towns in the Upper Ogun area, Ibadan derived materials and military supports from almost all over Oyo-Yorubaland. The number of Oyo-Yoruba towns which aided Ibadan was estimated as between 140 and 143.<sup>17</sup>

In spite of the impressive number of Oyo-Yoruba supporters, Ibadan and Ijaye could still not prosecute the war alone because the two towns, with their Oyo-Yoruba allies, were equal in military strength. In them lived the war veterans who formed the cream of the army which had defended the old Oyo Empire against the Fulani – led Ilorin attacks in the 1820s and 1830s. As comrades-in-arms, these soldiers knew each other's military ability, tactics and strategy. Their first clash at Batedo in 1845 had been indecisive. There had been no victor no vanquished. Consequently, the issue of leadership in Oyo-Yorubaland in particular and the whole of Yorubaland in general had not been decided. Therefore it became imperative for the side wishing to achieve decisive victory in the 1860 war to solicit military aid from other Yoruba towns. Thus on the eve of the war, each side looked frantically for allies. Ibadan got the support of Ife and Ijebu-Remo towns while Ijaye was backed by Ilorin, Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta. Of all the non-Oyo-Yoruba people who supported Ijaye, only the Egba of Abeokuta fought alongside the Ijaye soldiers on the battlefield.



The Ijaye negotiated for the alliance to save their town from being destroyed by their Ibadan enemies and to upset a grand alliance of most Oyo–Yoruba towns against them. The Ijaye realised that they were fighting not only against Ibadan but also against Oyo. These two enemies had on the eve of the war swayed many Oyo–Yoruba towns to their side by force and appeals to traditional loyalties to the extent that some towns like Iganna and Oke'ho in the upper Ogun had declared for them. Faced with formidable enemies which had started to undermine its authority in the Upper Ogun before the commencement of the war, Ijaye needed an alliance with a major Yoruba power to survive and remain victorious. Hence Kurunmi, the ruler of Ijaye, sent Oje, one of his war chiefs, to Abeokuta to negotiate alliance with the Egba.

In responding favourably to the Ijaye's request the Egba were guided by their national interest. They entered the war on the side of the Ijaye on 20 May 1860 and aimed at vanquishing Ibadan for a number of reasons quite different from the desire to save Ijaye town from destruction. First, they were motivated by the desire to forestall Ibadan's attack on their town. Rumours circulated in Abeokuta on the eve of the war that Ogunmola, the *Otun Balogun* (commander of the right wing) of Ibadan army had boasted that he would attack the town after destroying Ijaye. Though it is not certain that Ogunmola ever issued such a threat, Ibadan's anti-Egba activities since 1856 made the Egba to believe that the former intended to attack their town. Between 1856 and 1858 the chiefs of Ibadan and the *Alaafin* of Oyo had exchanged friendly diplomatic messages with Gezo, the King of Dahomey who had sent envoys to them to negotiate a grand alliance of Dahomey and some Yoruba states and kingdoms against Abeokuta. In 1858, Ibadan and Oyo's own envoys had returned from Dahomey laden with presents from King Gezo. In 1859, Ibadan had begun to make incursions into the Egbado territory which the Egba regarded as their area of political influence. In February 1860, Ibadan attacked Egba towns of Ilugun and Ido ostensibly to cut off supplies of arms through these towns to Ijaye but the Egba viewed this attack as Ibadan's attempt to link up with the army of Dahomey threatening to attack Abeokuta in that year.

Second, the Egba entered into the alliance to block Ibadan's access to the coast. Between 1859 and 1860, Ibadan had struggled to have direct access to the coast. In the process, the Ibadan traders had reached Imeko and established an agency there in 1859.<sup>18</sup> They had also established bases in Isaga and Isala, both towns in Egbado territory. The Egba saw the advance of Ibadan towards the coast especially through the Egbado area as a threat to their political and economic interests. In the first place, Ibadan's presence in Egbado area threatened their political authority in that sphere. In the second place, Ibadan's direct access to the coast would jeopardise Egba's middleman position between the coastal traders and the Yoruba in the interior. It would also make the Ibadan to have unlimited access to arms and ammunition to pursue their wars of expansion.

Third, the Egba saw Ibadan as a colossus aiming at bringing the whole Yorubaland under its political control and if it was allowed to subdue Ijaye, its next target would be Abeokuta. They were prepared in whatever way to curb Ibadan's expansive activities. In 1861, Thomas King, a missionary of Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) put their feeling in the following words: "If Ibadan were tigers every one must not yield implicit subjection to their ferocity."<sup>19</sup>

Fourth, the Egba wanted to seize the opportunity of the war between Ibadan and

Ijaye to recover their old homes from where they had been driven by the Oyo refugees between 1826 and 1829. This was their ulterior motive which became manifest as the war progressed. For instance, the *Parakoyi* (Egba chiefs in charge of trade and commerce) chiefs told Consul Foote who visited Abeokuta on 9 April, 1861, that the Egba's intention was not to draw back from the war till they had recovered the land where lay the ruined homes and graves of their fathers.<sup>20</sup> On 1 November, 1861, the *Apesi*, an Egba chief who, on that day, acted as the spokesman of the *Alake* (ruler of Abeokuta) at Abeokuta told Captain Bedingfield, A British Naval Officer, that the Egba "were determined never to give up the struggle till the Ibadan had altogether left the Egba lands. If the Ibadan would do it peacefully, there would be an end to the war."<sup>21</sup> There is also the evidence that the Egba intended to use the occasion of the war to liquidate both Ibadan and Ijaye. In 1863, for instance, *Balogun* Onafowokan (the Commander-in-Chief of Ijebu army) revealed the message sent by the Egba to the *Awujale* (ruler) of Ijebu-Ode at the commencement of the Ijaye War. He told the *Apena* of Lagos who had come on a peace mission to Ijebu Ode that "during the late Ijaye War, the Egbas sent to Jebu to say that two Yorubas are fighting, they are going to flog them..."<sup>22</sup> A combination of all these motives impelled the Egba to pull all their material and human resources to prosecute the war obviously on the side of the Ijaye. So involved were the Egba that, in its last phase, the war became apparently a contest between Ibadan and Abeokuta.

The motives of the Ekitiparapo allies were more diversified than those of the Ife-Ijebu and Ijaye-Egba allies. The Grand Alliance was formed against Ibadan by Ekiti, Ijesa, Igbomina and Akoko kingdoms in 1878. They were subsequently joined by the Egba, Ijebu, Ilorin and the Ife. Generally, the allies wanted to "clip the wings" of Ibadan which, in the course of its wars of expansion, had subjugated several Yoruba kingdoms and threatened the sovereignty of those that it had not yet conquered. Between 1844 and 1877 Ibadan had through intervention in local feuds and also under the pretence of flushing out Ilorin forces, conquered many Ekiti, Ijesa, Igbomina and Akoko kingdoms and brought them under political control.<sup>23</sup> By 1854, it had intervened in Ife/Modakeke feud and *ipso facto* added the two towns to its list of tributaries.<sup>24</sup> The Ijebu and the Egba feared that Ibadan would, if unchecked, eventually overrun their kingdoms. Indeed, determined raids on Egba farms by Ibadan in 1877 justified this fear.<sup>25</sup> Thus on the eve of the Ekitiparapo War, Ibadan had been regarded by all non-Oyo-Yoruba people as a monster with gaping jaws ready to swallow all Yoruba kingdoms.

Specifically each of the allies wanted to reduce the power of Ibadan or crush the city militarily for reasons arising from the consideration of its political and economic interests. The Ekiti, Ijesa, Igbomina and Akoko people who found the Ibadan administration of their towns, particularly the extortion and excessiveness of Ibadan *Ajele* (Residents) and messengers very galling and objectionable, organised a united front purposely to remove the yoke of Ibadan imperialism.<sup>26</sup> Though the Ijebu and the Egba had not yet been conquered, they joined the alliance to forestall being conquered by the Ibadan. Moreover, Ibadan's push towards the coast and its struggle to have direct link with the traders there either through their territories or through Egbado area mentioned earlier, was a threat to their economic interest. As middlemen between the merchants on the coast and the Yoruba in the interior, the Ijebu and the Egba blocked

the routes through their territory against Ibadan and joined the allies with a view to weakening Ibadan so that it would not be strong enough to push its way towards the coast. Also they intended, in this way, to deny Ibadan access to arms and ammunition.

The Ilorin wanted the military might of Ibadan to be crushed for a number of reasons different from those of Ekiti, Ijesa, Igbomina and Akoko towns *per se*. Unlike the Ijebu and the Egba, the sovereignty of their emirate was not immediately seriously threatened by the Ibadan. However, their war chiefs like other warriors in Yorubaland saw war as a means of increasing their wealth and influence. This was why, even though they regarded Ibadan as rival, they joined Ibadan warriors in despoiling Ekiti and Akoko towns in 1848 and 1875<sup>26</sup> and were prepared in 1877 to take part in Ibadan's raids on Egba farms.<sup>27</sup> Viewed in this way, I. F. Mustain's suggestion that the Ilorin war chiefs regarded the Kiriji War as a means of increasing their wealth and influence might not be out of place.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, it offered a greater opportunity for booty and the realisation of their longstanding political objectives than their participation in Ibadan's raids on the Egba. But the realisation of their political objectives was more fundamental than their desire for booty. Thus they wanted, first, to seize the opportunity of the war to reimpose their political control on their former Igbomina vassals and bring Ekiti towns under their political sphere. Their intention had been subtly expressed on their message to *Aare Latosa* ruler of Ibadan in 1878 in this way:

If a man's wife deserted him and afterwards repented and came back to him, is not the husband justified in receiving her back?<sup>29</sup>

Second, they had not forgotten that the Ibadan had robbed them of the fruits of their 1835 victory which led to the collapse of the old Oyo Empire. Their subsequent advance southwards to conquer the rest of Yorubaland had been checkmated at Osogbo in 1840 by Ibadan which also drove them from the Igbomina and Ekiti territories. Consequently, they always sought opportunities to weaken Ibadan so that it might be easy for them to extend their political authority to all Yorubaland. The Emir of Ilorin had said during the Ijaye War: "... we should combine against this Ibadan which had often baulked us of our prey; we may yet carry the Koran to the sea."<sup>30</sup> This, *inter alia*, precisely expressed why the Ilorin were, again in 1878, joining forces with Ibadan's enemies.

The various motives identified above are clear expressions of the national interests of the allies. These interests which were basically political and economic determined the extent of commitment of the allies in each of the alliances.

### Effects On Warfare

The allies introduced a number of changes in warfare. First, the bitterness with which they prosecuted their campaigns resulted in the evolution of the idea of total war in Yorubaland. Traditionally, there seemed to have been no great bitterness in the conduct of Yoruba wars. According to N.A. Fadipe, "all is fair in war" was the Yoruba's guiding principle of warfare.<sup>31</sup> Wars were ended by either negotiated peace or submission by the enemy; the vanquished were scarcely ruthlessly destroyed.<sup>32</sup>

Total war was introduced by the Ife-Ijebu allies which destroyed Owu town and, in the spirit of vendetta, put it under an interdict never to be rebuilt.<sup>33</sup> With the destruction of Egba towns, Abemo and Ijaye etc., in subsequent wars, total war seemed



to have become a major aspect of the 19th century Yoruba warfare.

Second, the unwillingness of the allies to break up until their campaigns had been brought to decisive ends and the collaborators of their enemies thoroughly chastised led to long sieges and prolonged state of warfare in Yorubaland. For instance, the Ife-Ijebu allies laid siege on Owu for about six years. They did not break up immediately after the town had been destroyed. Instead, they attacked Ikija which they accused of aiding Owu and having destroyed the former, they proceeded, in a piecemeal fashion, to attack and destroy other Egba towns until they finally encamped in Ibadan which they converted into a military town. The Ijaye-Egba allies also carried their campaigns beyond the main theatre of war into Ijebuland. They attacked Ijebu-Remo towns which they accused of being pro-Ibadan. Furthermore, the Kiriji War lasted for about eight years because the allies wanted to fight to the last and also because the diversified interests of the allies made peace negotiation tortuous and difficult. It seems, therefore, that the diversified interests of the allies more than any other factor widened the scope of wars and lengthened campaigns in the 19th century.

Third, the formation of alliances led to the deployment of large numbers of soldiers in battles. For instance, the Ibadan was said to have fielded an army of between 60,000 and 70,000 troops consisting of levies from Ibadan itself and its other Oyo-Yoruba supporters against Ijaye-Egba soldiers estimated at about 50,000.<sup>34</sup> The number of troops deployed on either sides in the Kiriji War was substantial. According to S.A. Akintoye the armies of Ibadan and the Ekitiparapo were estimated in 1886 as 60,000 and 40,000 soldiers respectively.<sup>35</sup> This large deployment of soldiers in wars in the 19th century made commissariat, hitherto less accentuated, one of the crucial aspects of war planning. Consequently, the welfare of troops was no longer that of the individual soldiers alone but also that of the war councils which had to make elaborate plans for regular supplies of provisions — food, medical items, arms and ammunitions etc. — from the home bases of the allies.

Fourth, the allies introduced changes in weaponry and tactics. The Ijebu soldiers at Owu were said to have introduced the use of guns and gun-powder in warfare. Guns and gun-powder were not new in Yorubaland in the 19th century but they were not, until 1821, used as weapons by an entire army. From thence, they featured regularly in Yoruba wars. In 1881 the Ekitiparapo society in Lagos whose membership comprised some Ekiti and Ijesa people, introduced Snider rifles — weapons of greater precision than guns and gun-powder — at the Kiriji battlefield.<sup>36</sup> Their use was at first confined to the Ekitiparapo allied army but they were later acquired by their opponents. As these new long-range weapons were increasingly preferred to the old ones — clubs, cutlasses, swords, bows and arrows etc. — old methods of fighting had to be gradually reduced. For instance, the havoc wrought at the Kiriji battlefield by the new weapons, particularly the rifles, led to the discouragement of battles in which opposing sides had to bare their chests open to each other. Thus pitched battles were avoided and hand-to-hand fighting method to which warriors fought at close quarters was cautiously employed only when combatants had expended their ammunitions. Also new methods of fighting such as shelling with barrages of gunfire, concealment of troops in trenches etc, accompanied with training and drilling of soldiers were employed in response to the introduction of the new weapons.<sup>37</sup>

### Effects on Inter And Intra-Group Relations

The alliance enhanced cooperation among friendly kingdoms, facilitated cordial political relations among erstwhile hostile ones and ensured unity among others that were previously disunited. Political relations among some kingdoms or sub-groups of the Yoruba in the 19th century seem to buttress this point and a brief reference to them will suffice. The first reference is to Ife-Ijebu relations. Ife and Ijebu kingdoms were southern Yoruba kingdoms whose rulers like other prominent Yoruba *Oba* shared a tradition of common descent from Oduduwa, the revered mythical progenitor of their race. Apart from this common bond, the Ife and the Ijebu engaged in bilateral economic relations involving exchange of merchandise in the Apomu market. It has also been suggested that the Ife sold their captives and victims of kidnapping exercises through Ijebu traders to the European slave dealers on the coast.<sup>38</sup> Their alliance in 1821 stretched their relations beyond mere economic cooperation. They consequently operated a joint army utilised by them for mutually advantageous purposes. For not only did their combined army enable the Ife to regain their lost market town, it also removed Owu's threat to Ijebu's economic interest and, through its ravages of Egba towns, ensured that the Ijebu got regular and abundant supplies of slaves for sale. Through joint campaigns, prominent Ife warriors like Okunade, the *Maye*, Labosinde, Derin-Okun, Kugbayigbe and a host of others developed *esprit de corps* with Kalejaye, Osulalu, Oguade Arowosanle and their other Ijebu comrades-in-arms. Indeed, throughout the century, the Ijebu did not pitch camp against allies supported by the Ife. For instance, the *Awujale* made sure that the *Ooni* of Ife was on the side of the Ekitiparapo allies before he officially committed himself to their cause.<sup>39</sup> He took two steps to ensure that the Ife were protected during the period of the war. First, he ordered *Balogun* Onafowokan, the Commander-in-Chief of Ijebu army to open Isoya road for them and placed a contingent of Ijebu army to guard it.<sup>40</sup> Second, in 1882, he dispatched a section of Ijebu army under Ogunsigun, the *Seriki*, to join *Ekitiparapo* forces to aid Ile-Ife against its Modakeke attackers.<sup>41</sup>

If the Ife-Ijebu alliance enhanced political relations between the Ife and Ijebu people, the Ijaye-Egba alliance created rapport among the people of Ijaye and the Egba of Abeokuta whose relations before 1860 had not been very cordial. Originally, Ijaye was an Egba Gbagura town. Its Egba inhabitants were driven away in c.1831 by Oyo refugee soldiers who occupied it.<sup>42</sup> One of the main preoccupations of Kurunmi who emerged as the ruler of the town in c.1832<sup>43</sup> was to prevent the Egba in the 1830s from recovering their lost homes. For this purpose, he had fought alongside the Ibadan army against Abeokuta in 1835. Consequently, except for a brief period between 1844 and 1845, there existed a state of latent hostility between the towns of Ijaye and Abeokuta. This was occasionally expressed in robbing and kidnapping along the road linking them.

However, towards the outbreak of the Ijaye War, Kurunmi was forced by increasing isolation of Ijaye by Oyo, Ibadan and their other Oyo-Yoruba supporters to eschew hostile manifestations toward the Egba. This, coupled with Ibadan's anti-Egba activities mentioned earlier, convinced the Egba that Ibadan and Oyo were more dangerous enemies to their alliance in 1860. Though it failed to save Ijaye from destruction, the alliance secured alternative source of provision for the Ijaye in Abeokuta when their strongholds in Oke Ogun (upper Ogun) had been destroyed by

Ibadan soldiers. Also it enabled a large number of Ijaye refugees to secure permanent settlement in a new quarter of Abeokuta called Ago-Ijaye where they were fully integrated into the mainstream of Egba socio-economic and political system.<sup>44</sup>

The alliance also ensured closer political relations between the Egba and the Ijebu (except the Ijebu Remo). Before the mid-19th century, relations between the two Yoruba sub-groups had not been cordial. The Ijebu had viewed the settlement of the Egba close to them with apprehension. They would have consequently destroyed the Egba's new settlement at Abeokuta in 1832 if *Oba Adele* of Lagos had not come to its aid.<sup>45</sup> After this date, hostility between the Egba and the Ijebu persisted till 1852 when the *Ooni* intervened to reconcile them. Even after the *Ooni's* intervention, an atmosphere of mutual suspicion pervaded their relations until they were forced in the late 1850s to come together to defend their political sovereignty and economic interest against Ibadan's imperial ambition. This new trend in their relations explained their support for Ijaye in 1860. While the Egba fought on the battlefield on the side of the Ijaye, the people of Ijebu-Ode and Ijebu-Igbo closed their roads against Ibadan to prevent it from having access to guns and gunpowder. They also raided Ibadan's farms and captured its tributary town of Apomu.<sup>46</sup> It also explained why the Egba fought against the Ijebu-Remo between 1862 and 1864 at the behest of the *Awujale*.<sup>47</sup> Subsequently, the Egba and the people of Ijebu-Ode maintained the spirit of the alliance. For instance in 1877, the *Awujale* refused to form alliance with the Ibadan against the Egba.<sup>48</sup> By 1879 both the Egba and the Ijebu actively supported the Ekitiparapo allies.

The Ekitiparapo alliance effected a remarkable change in the political relations of the Ekiti, Ijesa, Igbomina and Akoko kingdoms. Akintoye has shown that prior to the formation of the alliance, their relations were characterised, to a large extent, by moments of hostilities and lack of cooperation in the face of external attacks despite their traditions of common origin traceable either to Ife or Benin and in spite of dynastic marriages among many of their sovereigns.<sup>49</sup> Instead of forming a common front against their Benin, Ibadan, Ilorin and Nupe attackers, they had often carried wars of expansion into each other's territories. For instance, in the 1870s, the Ijesa were said to have directed their wars of expansion against Ekiti kingdoms which in turn menaced Akoko and Iyagba towns.<sup>50</sup> It is in view of this that their alliance in 1878 was a turning point in their political relations. It was a politico-military organisation which, for the first time, brought the notable warriors and the rulers of these kingdoms together for a common political purpose. Under the leadership of the *Owa* of Ijesa and with Ogedengbe as their Commander-in-Chief, these kingdoms spoke with one voice and conducted their external relations as one political unit in the last decades of the century. Even after the expiration of the period of emergency which brought them together, the kingdoms, in one form or the other, kept alive the spirit of the alliance till the early decades of the 20th century.

However, it should be noted that apart from the salutary effect discussed above, the alliances, with particular reference to Ife and Ijebu, engendered internal dissension within some kingdoms. Ife initially emerged from the Owu War as a military power to be reckoned with in southern Yorubaland. This coupled with its naturally defensive position in the forest area of Yorubaland and its revered status as the cradle of the Yoruba, made it a veritable sanctuary for refugees from a number of Oyo towns such



as Ikoyi, Ogbaagbaa, Ede, Ejigbo, Ola, Oje, Irawo etc. These refugees were integrated in various ways and Ife-Ife became one of the composite towns whose political problems since the mid-19th century had been largely influenced by the interaction of their constituent components.<sup>51</sup> Okunade and Labosinde, Ife's war veterans, who led the allied army, played leading roles in the occupation and early stages of the development of Ibadan. Under the leadership of Okunade who was also the first military ruler of Ibadan, the Ife became influential in the new town which was then looked upon as an extension of Ife kingdom. But in 1833 the pre-eminent position occupied by the Ife in the town was successfully challenged by the Oyo refugee soldiers whose population had become predominant in the town as majority of Ijebu soldiers had returned home after the campaigns. Having become dissatisfied with their lot and with Okunade's haughtiness and pro-Ife policies in particular,<sup>52</sup> they seized power and drove him and his men away from the town. They subsequently inflicted him with a humiliating defeat. The fall of Okunade meant a loss of political power and authority in Ibadan by the Ife and an end to the spirit of co-operation between them and the Oyo refugees.<sup>53</sup> The humiliation suffered by the Ife in Ibadan, *inter alia*, made them hostile to the Oyo refugees in their town who resultantly founded a new settlement named Modakeke for themselves and looked towards their Oyo brethren in Ibadan for protection. This was the genesis of Ife-Modakeke imbroglio.<sup>54</sup>

In Ijebuland, the constant closure of trade routes against Ibadan consequent upon the Ijebu's alliance with the Ijaye and the Ekitiparapo respectively did not please the Ijebu Remo and a substantial commercial population of Ijebu-Ode who refused to co-operate with the *Awujale*. As indicated earlier, the *Awujale* had to chastise the Ijebu Remo between 1862 and 1864 for not complying with his order to close roads to Ibadan. In 1883 the commercial class of Ijebu-Ode who found its business adversely affected by the trade embargo on Ibadan influenced *Balogun* Onafowokan and his soldiers, who had become frustrated by their reverses at their camp in Oru, to pressurise *Awujale* Fidipote, a committed ally of the Ekitiparapo, to open the routes for trade. The *Awujale* refused to succumb to pressure to open the routes and order the Ijebu to resume trade with the Ibadan. Consequently, a section of the military under the *Balogun* rebelled against him. *Awujale* Fidipote was driven from his throne to Epe where he died in 1885. He was replaced by a pro-Ibadan *Awujale* who unilaterally made peace with the Ibadan and opened trade routes for their traders.

The sudden withdrawal from the alliance by the new *Awujale* further caused division among the Ijebu. The people of Ijebu-Igbo who were predominantly farmers and consequently not guided by commercial consideration in taking political decision on the alliance, remained loyal to the Ekitiparapo allies and regarded *Balogun* Onafowokan as a traitor. Ogunsigun, their war leader, disagreed with Onafowokan and dissociated himself and his troops from the Ijebu-Ode's peace agreement with Ibadan. He and his contingent consisting mainly of Ijebu-Igbo warriors did not decamp from their base near Modakeke until after the 1886 peace treaty. In 1887, he attacked Oru and marched towards Ijebu-Ode. Civil war in Ijebuland was narrowly averted by a quick intervention of Ijebu elders<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

It is clear from the foregoing that Yoruba kingdoms, towns or sub-groups were motivated to form or join military alliances in the 19th century by their political and economic interests. These interests were also responsible for shifts in the alliances. For example, Ibadan and Ijaye which, as indicated earlier, allied against Abemo in 1835 were led by their conflicting political interests to form alliance against each other in 1845 and 1860. Similar shifts occurred in Ibadan-Ilorin relations. Although Ibadan and Ilorin were arch rivals and antagonists in Ekiti, Akoko and Yagba kingdoms, they joined forces against some towns in these areas whenever it was mutually beneficial for them to do so. Furthermore, though Ilorin intended to form alliance with Ibadan against the Egba in 1877, it was led by its political interest to change sides and join forces against its intended ally. Similarly, Ijebu-Ode was forced by the overriding economic interest of its commercial class in 1883 to pull out of the Ekitiparapo. Indeed, nearly all the kingdoms or states that formed military alliances at this period had been at one time or the other non co-operative or hostile neighbours. Thus it can be concluded that in their external relations in the century, Yoruba kingdoms or states did demonstrate that they had no permanent friends or permanent foes. Their permanent interests were always of paramount importance.

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## Chapter Nine

# The Ekiti of Ilorin Emirate in the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War

H.O. Danmole

### Introduction

This chapter examines the role of Ilorin, another power in Yorubaland in the 19th century in the Kiriji War. It pays particular attention to the contributions of the Ekiti under the political authority of Ilorin and analyses the implications of the war on the subsequent history of the Ekiti of Ilorin emirate.

### The Expansion Of Ilorin Emirate Into Ekiti Territory

The Ilorin Emirate was established in 1823 by Emir Abd ul-Salam (1823–1836). The Emir and his lieutenants immediately began the expansion of the emirate through outright wars of conquest and absorption of towns and villages around Ilorin.<sup>1</sup> The leaders of Ilorin directed their expansionist plans southwards and after a few years of the foundation of the emirate, many Igbomina towns such as Igbaja, Omupo, Ajase and the Ibolu territories of the Old Oyo Kingdom, namely Offa and Erin had become part of the emirate. In her conquest of these territories, the Ilorin army operated on familiar terrains. But the further south they went, the more difficult it was for them to operate because the success of their army depended on the ability of their cavalry. However, in their southward push, Ilorin successfully brought many Ekiti towns under her political authority although her military campaigns seemed to have failed in others.

Otun, an important Ekiti metropolis and the first headquarters of the Ekitiparapo army during the Kiriji War was attacked by the Ilorin army during the reign of Emir Shitta (1836–1861). The attempt by Ilorin to subdue Otun was seriously repulsed, although available evidence suggests that Otun sued for peace with cowries, loads of kolanuts and palm oil.<sup>2</sup> However, some accounts insist that Otun was never subdued by the Ilorin army. Atolagbe posited that Otun was brought under Ilorin hegemony by sheer diplomacy.<sup>3</sup> Daniel May, writing in 1858 stated that Otun was attacked and was partially destroyed by Ilorin, but that the Ilorin army failed to subject the town to Ilorin.<sup>4</sup> According to Akintoye, Otun was able to resist Ilorin because of its location in a hilly area and of the menace of tse-tse fly which made it difficult for cavalry forces used by the Ilorin to penetrate.<sup>5</sup> However, there is evidence to believe that in spite of Otun's strong resistance, Ilorin succeeded in placing an *Ajele* there after the Ibadan *Ajele* had been driven out probably at the beginning of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War.<sup>6</sup> When Lugard visited Otun in December, 1894, he found an Ilorin *Ajele* from Ilorin there.<sup>7</sup> Lugard's evidence also suggests that the *Oore* (king) of Otun protested that the town was neither under the Ibadan nor the Ilorin, but Lugard maintained that the *Ajele* from Ilorin must



remain in the town.

One of the most important Ekiti towns in the Ilorin emirate in terms of participation in Ekitiparapo/Kiriji War was Obbo. Obbo like Otun was attacked and brought under political authority of Ilorin during the reign of Emir Shitta, (1836–1861) who stationed an *Ajele* named Dangana in the town.<sup>8</sup> The Ilorin army carried their warfare to such other Ekiti towns as Osi, Idofin, Odo-Owa, Ilofa, Isapa, Eruku, Aye-Ekan now (Aiyedun) and various villages under the *Oore* of Otun.<sup>9</sup> Archival evidence suggests that Osi was burnt down and many slaves were caught and taken prisoner to Ilorin. The *Olosi* was initially brought to Ilorin but he was later allowed to return to his throne, and a certain Ajibade was appointed the Ilorin *Ajele*. He collected tributes and paid to Ilorin through the *Balogun* Gambari who was the *Babakekere*. Other *Ajeles* were stationed in many of the Ekiti towns under Ilorin's hegemony. The presence of these *Ajeles* later influenced the British in grouping Otun and other Ekiti towns with Northern Nigeria.

The interest of Ilorin in Ekiti towns during the 19th century was not just political. Indeed, the economic interest determined the pattern of relationship before and during the Kiriji War. As soon as an area became part of the emirate, be it by conquest or by absorption, the local ruler was allowed to retain his title in as much as such a ruler accepted the political authority of Ilorin, although he was carefully watched by Ilorin *Ajeles*. He was then required to pay tributes to Ilorin with the natural products of his area, which included palm oil, kola nuts and ropes. Slaves were also demanded.<sup>10</sup>

The relationship between the authority in Ilorin and her Ekiti district was exploitative in nature. As a result, Ilorin influence was limited. For instance, there is no record to show that Ilorin leaders attempted to spread Islam which perhaps could have brought the people of Ilorin and their Ekiti district closer. The kind of integration that took place between Ilorin and her metropolitan districts such as Afon, Onire, Malete and several others was absent in the case of Ilorin and her Ekiti districts. Consequently, by the outbreak of the Kiriji War, there was nothing in common between the two except the fact that the Ekitis of Ilorin emirate were, along with Ilorin, ready to liquidate Ibadan imperialism in Ekiti and Ijesa territories.

### **The Participation of Ilorin and Ekitis of the Emirate in the Kiriji War**

Before examining the roles and implications of the participation of the Ekitis of Ilorin emirate in the Kiriji War, it is relevant to analyse the circumstances which led to Ilorin's involvement.

Right from 1823 when the emirate began her wars of expansion into Yorubaland, Ilorin became a thorn in the flesh of her southern neighbours. In 1840 however, she suffered a significant defeat in the hands of Ibadan.<sup>11</sup> This victory sealed the hopes of Ilorin in her attempt to incorporate the whole of Yorubaland into the emirate. From 1840 onwards, Ibadan became Ilorin's great rival because both were engaged in struggles for acquisition of more territories in the Ekiti areas of Yorubaland where they engaged in several battles many years before the Kiriji War with Ibadan gaining the upper hand. For instance, the Ilorin army and the forces of Ibadan clashed at Otun in 1858 and 1864 to Ilorin's discomfiture.<sup>12</sup> In almost all the major wars fought in Yorubaland before Kiriji, Ibadan and Ilorin were always in opposing camps. While Ilorin aimed at carving out an "emirate of Yoruba" Ibadan wanted to rid Yorubaland of Fulani

invaders.<sup>13</sup>

In 1878 when the Ekitiparapo was formed with the sole aim of liquidating the power of Ibadan in Yorubaland, Ilorin seized the opportunity to ally herself with the alliance. Not that Ilorin was friendly with the Ekiti, before that date. Rather, she was ready to take over Ekiti and replace Ibadan as the controlling power wherever there was the opportunity. Even when Ilorin was joining the Ekiti to rid it of Ibadan imperialism Ilorin still held tenaciously to her territories in the parts of Ekiti held by her during and after the war.

Thus, the role of Ilorin in the Ekitiparapo was a complex one. For an instance it does not appear that she was sincere with the alliance. Soon after the Ekitiparapo army lost to Ibadan at Ikirun in the Jalumi War, Ilorin, perhaps because she was the most hit in terms of casualties during the war, was prepared to negotiate peace with Ibadan so that her soldiers captured by Ibadan would be released.<sup>14</sup> This attempt by Ilorin was rejected by Ibadan because the victory at Ikirun increased the morale of the leadership in Ibadan and because Ibadan did not trust the sincerity of Ilorin. In making peaceful overtures to Ibadan, Ilorin was out of tune with the other members of the Ekitiparapo who despite the victory of Ibadan at Ikirun, were now making further preparations against Ibadan. As expected, the leadership of the Ekitiparapo was disturbed by Ilorin's peace moves towards Ibadan and they made efforts to bring Ilorin back to the path of the Ekitiparapo. One of such efforts was the sending of a delegation of the Ekitiparapo to Emir Aliu (1869–1891) of Ilorin, although the latter was not convinced that he should continue with the war against Ibadan. *Balogun* Karara was in favour of continuing the war.<sup>15</sup> For one thing, an exchange of soldiers between Ilorin and the Ekitiparapo, designed to cement the alliances was already existing<sup>16</sup> and could not be easily unscrambled. Then there was the issue of Offa, which had sought assistance from Ibadan and which Karara was determined to destroy at all costs.<sup>17</sup> Ilorin therefore had no choice except to remain an ally of the Ekitiparapo.

Second, throughout the period of the Kiriji War, the Ilorin army under *Balogun* Karara was encamped at Offa which meant that its participation in the war centred only around protecting her Ibolo district of Offa and Erin rather than in joining the Ekiti subjects of Ibadan to fight for independence. Ilorin was well-placed through her Ekiti territories to send contingents to the Ekitiparapo army, but the initiative to join the Ekitiparapo army was left with her individual Ekiti subjects. Nor did Karara show any respect for Ogedengbe, the leader of the Ekitiparapo army, when efforts were being made to achieve permanent peace. In September 1886 Ogedengbe after the intervention of the British agents, had reached a peace accord with the Ibadan over the war. But he was still worried over continued hostilities in Offa either because of the Ijesa contingent that was with *Balogun* Karara or because of his conviction that without peace in Offa, it would be difficult to effect the peace treaty. He therefore sent messages to Karara to intimate him that peace had been achieved at Kiriji, that hostilities should cease and that the Ekitiparapo contingent at the Offa front should be released as the Ilorin soldiers at the Kiriji camp would soon be allowed to go home. Because Karara had not achieved his ambition of revenging the defeat at Ikirun, he simply refused to recognise the peace agreement.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed if Ilorin had allied with the Ekitiparapo for the purpose of securing the independence of colonised Ekiti, the destruction of Offa after the war had ended would

have been unnecessary, particularly when Ibadan had conceded Offa to Ilorin. The truth, however, was that Ilorin was interested in protecting her own interests and the half-hearted support which Ilorin gave the Ekitiparapo soon evaporated as she resumed her attack of Ekiti towns.

While Ilorin allied with the Ekitiparapo against Ibadan with the sole aim of protecting her interest, the Ekiti towns and villages under the hegemony of Ilorin joined the other Ekiti in the Kiriji War for such reasons as common descent, common imperial experience and the hope that with the defeat of Ibadan, attention might be turned against Ilorin.<sup>19</sup> The Ekiti of Ilorin emirate belonged to the larger Ekiti ethnic group majority of whom were under the Ibadan Empire in the 19th century. It was therefore natural for them to join the other Ekiti in their struggle against Ibadan. Apart from that, both Ibadan and Ilorin rule over the Ekiti was very exploitative. Surpluses accruing from economic activities were sent to both Ibadan and Ilorin through the *Ajele* system which the two powers operated.<sup>20</sup> The outbreak of the Kiriji War was therefore a good opportunity for the Ekiti of Ilorin emirate to unite with other Ekiti sub-groups for the overthrow of an exploitative overlord. Furthermore, the defeat of Ibadan and the attendant independence which the Ekiti kingdoms hoped to achieve meant that the Ekiti of Ilorin emirate could, through the support of other Ekiti, struggle for their freedom from the Ilorin hegemony. Indeed many years after the treaty of 1886 was signed, many Ekiti towns under Ilorin began to expel the Ilorin *Ajele*. Eruku and Obbo probably relying on some clauses in the 1886 treaty drove out the resident *Ajele* claiming that they were ordered to do so by the Lagos government.<sup>21</sup>

Akintoye has paid such considerable attention to the participation of Otun in the Kiriji War that it is not necessary to repeat it here.<sup>22</sup> What is important to note however, is that Otun was the entrepot of all the Ekiti of Ilorin emirate as it was for other Ekiti particularly after the battle of Ikirun (Jalumi War.) Otun served as the rallying point for Ekiti men who volunteered to participate in the war. It was the abode of the refugees of the Ikirun War. Also many Igbomina, particularly men from Ila and the present Omu-Aran, including Ose and Ifaja joined others at Otun.<sup>23</sup> As a result, the initial preparation for the actual conflict during the Kiriji War took place in an Ekiti town claimed by both Ibadan and Ilorin. The extent of the preparation was important for later developments which ensured the success of the Ekitiparapo forces in the conflict.

In participating in the Kiriji War, the location of Otun on the southern border of the emirate afforded other Ekiti settlements within the emirate the opportunity to take part in the war. Ekiti men from such places as Odo-Owa, Ilofa, Idofin, Obbo, Etan and several other villages went to Otun in preparation for the war. Contingents were sent to Otun from such places as Eruku, Osi and Ekan under *Balogun* Apapalaso.<sup>24</sup> Even when the headquarters of the Ekitiparapo moved from Otun to Imesi Ile, the Ekiti of Ilorin emirate continued to take active part in the war. Oral evidence insists that the contingent from Etan was led by a certain Agada, who had the reputation of being a fiery warrior.<sup>25</sup> However, there is no other evidence yet to assess the role of Agada in the war. Traditions from Osi would also want us to believe that the commander of the Ekiti War camp at Aiyede was from Opin in the Ekiti district of Ilorin emirate.<sup>26</sup> Aruku, the *Balogun* of Obbo during the Kiriji War also led the Obbo contingent in the defence of north eastern boundaries of the Ekiti territory during the war and some years later when the Ilorin army resumed attacks of Ekiti territory.<sup>27</sup> The various Ekiti commu-



nities of Ilorin emirate contributed in no small measure to the war efforts of the Ekitiparapo. Their participation in the Kiriji War affected the subsequent history of the Ekiti in the emirate.

### **Implications of Kiriji War On The Ekiti Of Ilorin Emirate**

The Kiriji War had several implications for the subsequent history of the Ekiti in general and the Ekiti of Ilorin emirate in particular. Like all wars, it led to enslaving free citizens and to the destruction of lives and properties. The war also led to population movement. For example, the Ekiti of Imoji and Ajure moved to their site in Ekan Meje.<sup>28</sup> Before the Kiriji War, Otun and the surrounding villages were very important as trading centres.<sup>29</sup> The war disrupted the markets first, because traders could not move easily and second because many able bodied men volunteered to join the rank and file of the Ekitiparapo Army.<sup>30</sup>

The Kiriji War also affected relations between the Ekitis of Ilorin emirate. The war brought them together at Otun Ekiti as a fighting force against Ibadan. Scattered Ekiti villages also joined together as a unit for security. The development at Ekan during the war clearly illustrates this point. During the war, Ekan served as a centre for seven of the villages involved in the war, namely Ekan, Aiye Ekan (now Aiyedun) Ilale, Imoji, Ajure, Erinmope and Ipetu.<sup>31</sup> Because of this gathering at Ekan, the status of the *Elekan* increased in importance as he became the *Elekan* of Ekan Meje. However, the Kiriji War also helped to generate discord between some Ekiti towns such as Osi and Etan. Osi was said to have raided Etan in search of goods such as palm oil, vegetables and other stored products and to have attempted to annex part of Etan when able bodied men from Etan had gone to Kiriji.<sup>32</sup> Although the attack was warded off by Etan, the relations between Osi and Etan were seriously strained.

Revolts against the over-rule of Ilorin in the Ekiti districts of the emirate were also direct result of the Kiriji War. After the treaty of 1886, Ekiti district under Ibadan were freed of Ibadan's control as they passed into the hands of the British.<sup>33</sup> But the treaty did not affect the Ekiti district of Ilorin emirate because Ilorin was not a signatory to it. However, the Ekitis of the emirate began to revolt against the authority of Ilorin by refusing to pay tributes to Ilorin particularly after 1894 when Captain Bower, representing the Lagos Government and Captain (later Lord) Lugard for the Royal Niger Company, fixed the boundary between Ilorin and the south at Odo Otin.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Otun along with Aiyede and Ishan drove out the *Ajele* from Ilorin in 1896 as Obbo and Eruku had done two years earlier. It was the attempt of the Ilorin army to bring back Otun to the fold of Ilorin that led to the Erinmope War in 1896, in which the Ilorin army lost. In spite of the defeat of Ilorin in this war, Otun remained a part of the emirate.

One of the post war developments resulting from the Kiriji War was the meeting of an Ekitiparapo council which comprised the Oba of Ekiti and Ijesa that participated in the Kiriji War. The meeting was held at the instance of Major Reeve-Tucker at Ilesa in June 1900.<sup>35</sup> The meeting was attended by 16 *Obas* including the *Oore* of Otun and the *Owal'obbo* of Obbo, both of whom were from Ilorin emirate. With the transfer of Otun to Southern Nigerian in 1936, Obbo became the only Ekiti town in the emirate that joined the Ekitiparapo chiefs in 1900.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, the meeting was always referred to by the people of Obbo in their struggle for the upgrading of their traditional

ruler. It is always argued that the *Owa'obbo* was the fourth in rank of the Ekiti traditional chiefs, the first being the *Oore* of Otun while the *Ewi* of Ado and the *Elekole* were second and third respectively.<sup>37</sup>

The Kiriji War also had implications for political development of the Ilorin emirate during the colonial rule. Right from the beginning of this century, Otun and less effectively other Ekiti settlements in the emirate clamoured for transfer to Southern Nigeria. The request for transfer of Otun was granted in 1936. The transfer of Otun increased the agitation of other Ekiti settlements in the emirate for the same treatment. During the agitation, the Kiriji War and the attendant treaty became the point of reference for Ekiti towns of Obbo, Osi, Odo-Owa, Eruku and Etan. In their petitions for political regrouping, they argued that they fought side by side with their Ekiti brothers in Southern Nigeria during the Kiriji War but instead of remaining independent of Ilorin as other Ekiti were in relation to Ibadan, they were still paying homage to the Emir of Ilorin which they considered contrary to the treaty of 1886.<sup>38</sup> While it is true that these Ekiti towns fought along with the other Ekiti outside the emirate, the peace treaty of 1886 was not binding on Ilorin as mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, the consequence of the Kiriji War provided a basis for unity among the Ekiti of the emirate.

The Kiriji War continued to feature prominently in the spate of chieftaincy review panels set up by successive government of Kwara State many decades after the war had ended.

## Conclusion

The Kiriji War and its attendant implications contributed to the shaping of the history of Yorubaland from the last two decades of the 19th century to the present. While the war was fought by the Ekiti against Ibadan, Ilorin the rival of Ibadan since the 1840s, took the opportunity to ally with the Ekiti. In her alliance with the Ekitiparapo, Ilorin only set out to achieve her ambition of replacing Ibadan as the overlord in Ekiti, this feat she was unable to accomplish. Indeed the role of Ilorin in the alliance was very ambivalent. Due to her failure to achieve her objective, Ilorin resumed her raids into Ekitiland until she was stopped by the forces of the colonial administration in Lagos.

The Ekiti of the emirate displayed a keen sense of unity and responsibility. Their contributions to the war effort at the initial stages as well as during the actual conflicts helped to raise the morale of the Ekitiparapo leaders. However, they did not derive much benefit from their participation because unlike the Ekiti under Ibadan, they remained under the hegemony of Ilorin. Nevertheless their participation at Kiriji continued to be a rallying point for the Ekiti of Ilorin emirate in their political and economic struggles between themselves and other groups in the present Kwara State, a hundred years after the treaty that brought the Kiriji War to an end.

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## Chapter Ten

# Women and Warfare in 19th Century Yorubaland: An Introduction

Bolanle Awe and Omotayo Olutoye

The series of wars in 19th century Yorubaland<sup>1</sup> had far-reaching effects on Yoruba society. They gave effect to revolutionary changes in the political system. They affected its demographic pattern. They affected trade and economic development. Their effect was therefore felt by all Yoruba citizens – male and female. In a polygamous society, these wars with the accompanying loss of lives had a traumatic effect on women as was borne out by the song which was sung at the outbreak of the *Ijaye War*:<sup>2</sup>

*Baba mi a re igbo odaju o! o! o!*  
*Nibi ti olomo meji yio ku okan*  
*Nibi ti olomo kan yio pohora.*

My master is going to the field of the heartless  
Where the parent (mother) of two will be left with  
but one  
Where the parent (mother) of one will be left all  
forlorn.

In discussing these wars, however, the tendency among historians has been to regard them as an essentially all-male affair in which women were not involved. Attention is often focused on the exploits of the men, the war leaders and chiefs who distinguished themselves on the battlefield. The literature on Yoruba warfare provides another example of historical writing in which "women and their roles are often glossed over, under-analysed or absent from all but the edges of the description." Yet, to comprehend the totality of human experience in this war-ridden century, the experience of women must also be analysed.<sup>3</sup>

As with discussions of women's role in African history, the problem is essentially that of methodology, not of source materials. The sources are readily available and abundant. Oral traditions of the early history of the Yoruba are replete with examples of women playing a crucial role in the survival of their people in times of war. The examples of Moremi of Ife and Arise of Ilesa, both of whom devised strategies to overcome the enemies of their peoples are well known. In Akure, the title *Yeyelogun* (mother at war) even though now borne by a priestess whose duty is to recount daily the names of Akure heroes, suggests active female participation in warfare at a particular period in Akure history. For the more recent history, there is adequate written evidence as well as extant oral traditions, eye witness accounts, remembered histories of the last two or three generations, songs, praise poems etc which, in many cases, are awaiting collection by researchers. They constitute a rich source for reconstructing the

history of the role of women in the 19th century wars.

The methodological problem is one of approach to the evidence. It stems primarily from the tendency to impose Western conceptual framework on the material by historians whose stance is already a male-oriented one.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately for the history of African women, Western experience of women and war has been limited to the Crimean War, and more recently, Israeli women soldiers and the women's auxiliary forces of the two World Wars. Analysing the sources in the context of Western conceptual framework can therefore only lead to an unsatisfactory, or even no perception of the women's role. Right questions will not be asked of the evidence, and women are assumed to have been operating in the domestic domain while leaving the business of war and the battlefield to the men.

It is, of course, inevitable that women should play a significant role in the wars of the 19th century for many reasons. These wars constituted a significant mirror of the politics of the age. War is "only a part of political intercourse... a continuation of political intercourse with a mixture of other means". Women were fully involved in the politics of the 19th century. Warfare encompasses within it three major steps:

- I. Deliberations on the need to declare war
- II. Actual Warfare
- III. Peace settlement.

The first and third steps are essentially political ones which entail decision-making by the people. The towns concerned would have to deliberate among their citizens and decide whether to go to war or not, and also determine when to stop fighting so as to reach agreement with their opponents. Women were certainly involved in this decision-making; as they were essentially traders, they were interested in the issues of war and peace as these affected the closure or opening of roads. By virtue of the fact that they supplied ammunition to soldiers, their views carried weight in matters affecting war and peace.

Indeed the principle of representation is well established among Yoruba people. Every major interest was represented in making decisions that affect their lives. Yoruba women constitute a major interest group and had certain inalienable rights as citizens. Among these were the rights to discuss public policies and to be represented in decision-making bodies.

There were also constitutional provisions for women to participate in decision-making at all levels of government. Among the Egba, the real rulers of the society were the *Ogboni*. Biobaku<sup>6</sup> has described them as "a society of wealthy and influential men and few old women who can be relied upon to place duty above sentiment". These women were the *Erelu* who had been estimated to be about 20 per cent of the *Ogboni* membership. In some other Yoruba societies, women were able to participate directly in the affairs of the town through their own representatives. Such representatives were generally referred to as *Iyalode*.<sup>7</sup> Although they were often outnumbered by the male chiefs and could be regarded as token figures, yet, because of the network of female support which they organised right down to the grassroots, they were able to mobilise female opinion in support of their views. The degree of influence which they wielded varied from place to place.

Among the Ondo and the Ijesa, the *Lobun* and the *Ariase* were virtually coequal with the male rulers. In the case of the *Lobun*, she held her own court with other female chiefs



and passed their views and decisions on all issues that affected the welfare of the town to the male ruler and his chiefs. Among the Ijesa, the Owu, Ijebu and the Ibadan, this woman leader was a member of the Council of Chiefs.

The *Iyalode* of Ibadan in the 1880s went with the chiefs to Ikirun where a make-shift government and council of war were set up to advise the war chiefs. She was a member of these two bodies and was recognised as a leader of the community of women. In the peace making moves, Aare Latosa, the leader of Ibadan forces, specifically mentioned the fact that the *Iyalode* was at one with the other chiefs in agreeing to peace moves when Reverend J.B. Wood<sup>8</sup> came to investigate the possibilities of a peace settlement in 1881. Wood himself reported that both the *Iyalode* at Ikirun and Omosa, a notable Ibadan woman entertained him and his party lavishly in an attempt to encourage them to make peace as quickly as possible. Indeed *Iyalode* Lanlatu was a signatory to the Peace agreement which the Ibadan signed with the British government. It was a significant agreement which started the reduction of Ibadan to a British dependency. That agreement also confirmed the treaty made by the *Alaafin* of Oyo in 1888 in which he promised not to "enter into any war or commit any act of aggression on any of the chiefs bordering on Lagos by which Lagos trade will be disrupted."

In more centralised societies like Oyo where the balance of power was tilted in favour of the ruler, the *Alaafin*, participation in decision-making at that higher level could only be indirect through women<sup>9</sup> who were appointed to support and enhance royal authority. Such women could, by virtue of their position influence the ruler who had the authority. Because they played a supportive role to the *Alaafin*, they were known as *Ayaba* (king's wives). Information about particular occupants of these positions are not easily available, possibly because Oyo was not directly involved in warfare in the 19th century. However, there is evidence of the constitutional provision for these offices and the titles did exist even in the 19th century. Present holders of these titles have also given some information about their roles. It is clear however that they could wield great influence in the affairs of state. For instance, *Iya Kekere* who looked after all the royal paraphernalia also had power over the Commander in Chief of the Oyo army and could have him arrested. The three male *Iwarefa*, the *Alaafin*'s closest advisers and confidants, could only approach him through the *Iya Afin* who were their official mothers who in turn acted as political and religious advisers to the *Iwarefa*. Obagunte, another female chief, was the *Alaafin*'s representative at the meetings of the *Ogboni*. It was through her that the head of that society had access to the *Alaafin*.

Apart from participation at such high level, women and men had a chance to comment on the issues at stake such as war and peace. Revd. Townsend<sup>10</sup> noted in Abeokuta in 1860 before the outbreak of the Ijaye War, that the people attended a public meeting about the war. He also observed that the whole population was interested in the Ijaye War and had Ijaye sympathies. In writing about the Kiriji War, Akintoye<sup>11</sup> also noted that occasionally it was necessary to call a meeting of the general body of people — men, women and children in the camp. He described this assembly as the highest authority in decision-making. Everyone participated, if only to acclaim or decry the steps taken by their leaders. At such general meetings where all participated, it might be difficult to assess women's contribution as to whether they were passive on-lookers rubber stamping whatever the men decided or whether they aired their own

views.

However, on occasions when there was no ready consensus on the declaration of war or peace, factions and pressure groups developed and these in turn provided an insight into the women's role. In expressing their views, they could resort to verbal assault and physical abuse of those who stood against their interest. They were masters of witty songs and witty and incisive sayings and comments which summed up their positions most succinctly. The Ijaye War episode is replete with many examples. Ibadan and Ijaye were rivals for leadership of the Oyo-Yoruba, but under rulers like Oluyole, Ibikunle and Oguémola it appeared as if the Ibadan were at the point of establishing their hegemony. The women of Ijaye summed the mood of Ijaye by singing in 1860:

*Ibadan a ko gba Ajele<sup>13</sup>*  
*Orogun li a wa se.*

Ibadan we won't accept your consul  
We are rivals.

Ibikunle who was the leader of the peace party in Ibadan was taunted in various songs for his apparent cowardice. On such occasions they constituted themselves into a pressure group to goad their leaders to war. The records are even more explicit as to their role in the Kutuje War which immediately followed the Ijaye War. With the Ibadan defeat of Ijaye, Ijaye allies fell on the people of Ijebu Remo who had been supplying the Ibadan people with arms. Ibadan soldiers could not go immediately to the help of the Remo because they were still fighting at Awaye. The missionaries in Ibadan noted that public feeling particularly among the traders, was in favour of giving the Remo help, and the women staged demonstrations for this purpose.

There were also instances where individual women assumed leadership of a particular faction in the politics preceding the declaration of war. Such was Abu<sup>13</sup> the rich woman trader of Okeho, who, according to the oral traditions, was the mother-in-law of Kurunmi of Ijaye. She resisted the attempt to undermine Ijaye's authority by transferring Okeho, its tributary town, to Oyo. According to Rev. Meakin, she led the pro-Ijaye party in Okeho and forcibly collected tribute to send to Ijaye rather than to Oyo. The attempt by the *Alaafin* to stop her emissaries led to the first clash between Kurunmi and the *Alaafin*. This eventually precipitated the outbreak of the war between Ijaye and Ibadan which claimed to be fighting the *Alaafin's* cause.

Once the decision had been taken to declare war, it was never a case of the women sitting at home to tend the home fires while the men went to defend their kith and kin. The women featured in all phases of hostilities. In some instance, they provided the occasion for the outbreak of war like Helen of Troy. The killing of the pregnant Ijebu woman at Owu triggered off the Owu War. The indecent assault of the wives of Fabunmi of Imesi Igbodo and the ruler of the same town provided the occasion for the Ekiti's decision to reject Ibadan overlordship. The capture of Derin Ologbenla's wife by the Ondo started the war between Ondo and Oke-Igbo.

In the actual warfare and the clash of arms on the battle-field, women also played their part, although there was no tradition of female combatants as among the Amazons of Dahomey. There were a few instances of Yoruba women resorting to war and facing the heat of battle. Such female warriors were often women of distinction and noble birth

whose circumstances made it possible for them to do away with tradition and assume unconventional roles. Such was Omosa,<sup>14</sup> a wealthy woman and daughter of Basorun Ogunmola. She often donned her late father's battle dress to lead Ibadan forces personally on horseback against Ijebu soldiers who raided Ibadan farms during the Kiriji War. Another such character was the Wabodu, a leading princess of Oke Igbo and daughter of Derin Ologbenla. She was also well-known for her combatant posture. An eye witness account<sup>15</sup> recalled the picture of this fair, beautiful woman who was always in battle dress and carrying a gun. Some other influential women however contented themselves with the fielding of soldiers for war. Since there was no regular army, the raising of troops was done on an *ad hoc* basis. The warrior chiefs brought their own soldiers and equipped them for war by providing them with food and weapons. These wealthy women also supplied soldiers to the army on the same basis. In Ibadan, the title of *Iyalode* was created to honour Iyaola, the first *Iyalode* of Ibadan for her contribution to Ibadan war efforts in the 1850s.

For the generality of women, their role at the scene of battle was not in the area of actual physical combat. Most of the major wars of this period lasted for a fairly long period and soon assumed a static character. Ajayi and Smith described the Ibadan camp during the Ijaye War as assuming the nature of a town. Houses and huts were built and the social life of the town was maintained. Akintoye estimated that there were about 40,000 people in the Ekitiparapo camps while the Ibadan camp had about 60,000 inhabitants. He surmised that quite a large number of these were wives, children and other attendant fighting men. Rev. Wood in 1884 said that the sexes appeared to be equally represented in the Ibadan camp.

What were these women doing? Their functions were well mapped out. They provided essential services to make military life tolerable. As we have noted, some of them were wives providing for their warrior husbands the comforts of a home during this long enforced stay away from their homes. Father Holley who visited Ogedengbe at the Ekitiparapo camp observed that "in the middle of the heap of arms the general-in-chief ruled modestly surrounded by his wives and children. Such was the condition in which many of the war leaders lived; these women cooked for them, and looked after their general welfare." Oral traditions<sup>17</sup> at Oye (Ilupeju) recount how young maidens often in the nude for security reasons possibly to guard against poisoning, prepared food for Lugbosun Fajembola; one of his daughters, Adeboyejo had to stay with her father at the camp for the whole period of the Kiriji War. Many of the young but grown-up girls under armed escort brought food from home. During the Ijaye War, the *Iyalode* of Ibadan organised supplies of food from Ibadan farms and markets for Ibadan soldiers in camp. In the besieged town of Ijaye too, the women brought food and military supplies to the walls for the soldiers defending the town.<sup>18</sup> Women traders not only procured food but also organised the sale of cooked food to those who didn't have their wives with them in the markets.

Apart from providing this physical sustenance, the women gave the warriors the psychological boost which encouraged them to persevere with the fighting. They were the praise singers who, by recalling the deeds of the warriors, ancestors and their past performance in previous wars, edged on to brave deeds of daring. Adeboyejo, the daughter of Lugbosun of Oye, not only cooked for her father she also led him to the battle front singing and dancing before his horse.



In this field of morale boosting, the metaphysical approach to warfare was also adopted; traditions tell of women who called on supernatural agents to aid their men in war; in Oye was Molebi, nicknamed '*Elegberun Ibon*' (the owner of 1,000 guns) who was reported to have fought single-handedly against Ibadan soldiers at night and rendered them vulnerable to Ekitiparapo attacks the following day. A female deity, Aisegba, was reported to have gone to war selling poisoned food to the Ibadan, and at strategic times conjured rain on them. Another female deity at Ara, Owarunula, also acted as the saviour of her people at critical times. Orisaleke, the wife of Ogedengbe also provided this mystical support; she was regarded as Ogedengbe's mascot; a very bold and daring woman; she was said to have mystical power and controlled unseen supernatural forces to ensure that Ogedengbe won all his battles; she was also described as a master in the preparation of potent charms to protect Ogedengbe and give him victory over his enemies. Just as some women exercised their mystical power in the camp, so other women at home made sacrifices to ensure the safe return of the soldiers from the battle front.

While the war lasted however, they made sure that the warriors stood their ground on the battle front and that there were no deserters. They stood at the gates occasionally to prevent the soldiers from defecting. They also kept watch to ensure that the men responded swiftly to surprise attacks particularly at night. In 1851, Bowen stated that he had false alarms at night when the women made the air ring with the shrill cry "*Ele!, Ele!*" (To arms, To arms)<sup>19</sup>.

Other women who did not stay at home or in the camp went about ascertaining that the soldiers, got the most essential needs for warfare, — guns and ammunition. Initially, in the earlier part of the century warriors used swords, cutlasses and spears; but even as early as the time of the outbreak of the Owu War, imported guns and ammunition began to feature in the wars. By the time of the Kiriji War they had become the regular weapons of war and the early acquisition by the Ekitiparapo Forces, particularly the Breach loading rifles nearly tilted the balance of war in their favour until the Ibadan also acquired them. These new weapons were imported and came to the Yoruba country through the ports of Lagos, Badagry and Porto Novo; along trade routes which traversed the Egba and Ijebu territories. With the increasing tendency of these two groups to close their routes, an eastern route through eastern Yoruba country was opened in the 1870s;<sup>20</sup> this route also led to Benin which provided the Yoruba country with ammunition.

This trade was a long distant one involving overseas exportation and importation. Locally woven cloths, palm oil and palm kernel from the middle of the century, ivory, etc. were exchanged in return for tobacco, textiles, beads, liquor and most importantly for 19th century warfare, guns and ammunition. Some notable women traders participated in this external trade along with the men who were dominant in the long-distance trade. They were to be found in many of the major towns and featured prominently in the history of the 19th century; as we have noted earlier, Abu in Okeho was one of them; in Ilesa were Itiola at Omofe and Jadu in Isona; Tinubu and Jojoola became famous traders in Abeokuta; in Ibadan, apart from Efunsetan, there were Iyaola, the first *Iyalode* and Efunsetan's contemporaries, Yade, Efundunke and Olojo.<sup>21</sup> More field work still has to be done to reveal the activities of some of these women particularly in the northeastern part of the Yoruba country. The role of women traders in the settlement

of Ayesan where some Ekitiparapo elite settled to ensure the free flow of ammunition to the Ekitiparapo forces also needs to be investigated.

What is quite clear is that these women traders were wealthy and traded on a large scale; their slaves went to all parts of the country to trade on their behalf. Even during periods of hostility, trading by them continued. They travelled during such periods in caravans escorted by armed soldiers. Clarke<sup>22</sup> noted in the 1850s that these caravans were made up mostly of women; Bowen also testified to the fact that "a good many men and still more women were engaged in this traffic" (trade). These women had large stocks which they made available to the warriors. According to oral traditions, Omosa had a room full of guns and another full of gun powder. They often made contribution to the war efforts by making donations of ammunition to the town; their greatest assistance however was in the extension of credit facilities to the warriors. They gave them weapons on credit when going to war and expected to be paid back in slaves and other spoils of war at the end of the war.

Nor must the women casualties of war be forgotten; some lost their lives while others were wounded; the rest were taken captive and in many cases they were used as domestic slaves or ended up as their masters' wives. They therefore became channels of cross-cultural influence;<sup>24</sup> they brought many of their customs and practices with them and these have survived in their new homes. In the 1850s after many Ibadan expeditions to Ijesa and Ekiti countries, the Ijesa mode of salutation became very common in Ibadan; indeed in the compound of *Balogun Akere*, that link with Ijesa still persists.

For the actual maintenance of peace, the women became crucial agents, the effective tools for cementing alliances. Dynastic marriages were common among the warriors to ensure close relationships between the families competing for power; new bonds of understanding were forged, and military, economic and political allegiance was secured; such diplomatic ties cut across the societies and cities of opposing forces throughout the 19th century. Akintoye<sup>25</sup> pointed out that such dynastic marriages occurred among the Ekiti ruling houses; Fabunmi's mother was an Ogotun princess, and dynastic marriages were contracted between Ara and Ado Ekiti rulers, as well as between Ikole, Otun and Ido.

Ogedengbe had wives from various parts of Yorubaland and beyond for the same purpose. The ruler of Ila sent him his daughter to prevent an attack on that town. He had among his wives an Akoko princess, Desipo, the daughter of Owa Bepo, Sajeku, the daughter of the Risawe. He also gave his daughters in marriage to notable personalities; one of them became the wife of Owa Aromolaran. In the same tradition, Momoh the King of Ilorin gave his daughter in marriage to *Oluyole* of Ibadan early in the century. Johnson recounts the case of *Ayawo*, the daughter of the defeated Olu of Ilaro who became Sodeke's wife after the Ijana War in the late 1830s. On Sodeke's death, she was inherited by Somoye: she went with him to the Ijaye War, but was captured and given to Ogunmola. The latter sent her back to Somoye and she helped to reconcile Ibadan and Abeokuta in 1865.

In concluding this discussion of the role of women in wars in the 19th century, it will be useful to examine the activities of two distinguished Yoruba women of that period, Tinubu and Efunsetan, as case studies.

Tinubu's life history has been adequately studied by historians; all that is necessary

is to examine her activities in Lagos and Abeokuta. An Egba woman trading in Lagos in the first few decades of this century, she got involved in the politics of the royal succession in Lagos in the 1840s. She supported Akintoye against Kosoko and went with the former to Badagry. There she provided him with money and ammunition to plan his return to Lagos. With his return to Lagos, she became very prominent in Lagos politics to the chagrin of the British Consul. She was eventually expelled from Lagos because of her stand against innovations being introduced by the British and the repatriates. But while in Lagos in 1854, she was involved in diplomatic moves to gain support for Dosunmu, Akintoye's son who had just ascended the throne. She pleaded with the Egba to assist him to attack Olomowewe, a small town near Lekki, which was hostile to Dosunmu.

But it was in Abeokuta that she came into her own. She started trading in arms and soon became very notable for it. She had over 60 slaves handling her business and she employed a literate clerk to assist her. Information about her role in the Ijaye War is not clear; Delaney in 1860 accused her of "sending guns and powder to Aare," the Chief of Ijaye, but she issued a denial. When the theatre of war shifted to Remo country however, she prepared to go to the camp with the warrior. But when the war became too prolonged and started to disturb the free flow of trade, she led the peace party in Abeokuta for its cessation, and even appealed to the *Alaafin* of Oyo, Adelu, to make peace between the opposing sides.

It was, however, in the Dahomey War that her distinguished contribution to warfare is best remembered. Ajisafe claimed that she wore warrior clothes and took a position at the Owu gate to turn back deserters and supply the warriors with food and ammunition on a continuous basis. According to Biobaku, S.O., she organised the women of the town into a nursing corps to administer to the wounded. Her compound also became a supply arsenal to the soldiers. In recognition of her contribution to Egba War efforts she was made the first *Iyalode* in Abeokuta.

Her contemporary, Efunsetan, was another woman of Egba ancestry who migrated to Ibadan. She also became a very prosperous and rich trader at Oja-Oba. Oral evidence reveals that she had three large farms in each of which no less than 100 slaves worked. She extended credit facilities in the form of ammunition to the warriors when they were going on their military expeditions in 1872. She fielded 100 slaves as soldiers under her head slave, Ogidan, to join the Ibadan forces on their expedition to the Ekiti country.

Even before then, she had been made the *Iyalode* of Ibadan in recognition of her contribution in this and other fields. As the leader of the women in Ibadan and a successful trader in arms, she was therefore in a position to contribute to the debate on the issues of war and peace. She soon became the spokesman of the anti-war group in Ibadan; she was against the expansionist policy of Aare Latoosa which brought many towns under Ibadan's jurisdiction.

The activities of these two women have brought into focus the part women played in the wars of the 19th century. They influenced decisions as to war and peace, they ensured a regular supply of weapons to their people, they even fielded their own soldiers. By their activities they enhanced the level of female contribution to 19th century warfare and raised it beyond that of a mere supportive one to that of one that is as important as that of the male warriors. This is not of course to disparage the supportive role which women also played, but it was an important one for the successful



prosecution of the wars. The point to note is that in the area of warfare as in other aspects of Yoruba life, the relationship between men and women during the wars was a complementary one. Women were not second fiddles; their role complemented that of the male warriors in the defence of their country.

It is however necessary to draw attention to the fact that the focus in this paper has been largely on that part of the Yoruba country which were the main theatres of war during the 19th century. Not much work has been done among other Yoruba subgroups such as the Ondo, Owo, Ilorin, Offa, Ijebu, etc. Nor has there been much discussion of warfare during the earlier part of the 19th century. To get a holistic view of women's role in these wars, there is an urgent need for more field work particularly in those areas not covered by this introductory study.

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## **Chapter Eleven**

# **The Causes of the 19th Century Yoruba Civil Wars**

### **I.A. Akinjogbin**

For a number of important reasons, the Yoruba Civil wars of the 19th century have continued to engage the attention of the historians of Yorubaland. Perhaps the first of those reasons is the enigma of the phenomenon itself. One hundred years of civil wars with a few short intermissions of peace, without anyone or group being able to arrest them, within a nation known for orderly organisation and obedience to moral authority, until an external force became available, certainly deserves scrutiny.

Second and perhaps much more importantly, the consequences of those devastating wars are still with us today in form of completely abandoned city-sites<sup>1</sup>, new urban agglomerations which even after 100 years, are not yet completely integrated into the pre-existing socio-political environments, giving rise to tensions between the old and the new,<sup>2</sup> new societal value formations which are still noticeable today among different sections of Yoruba men. Among those who were forced to abandon their homes by wars and famine can be noticed an attitude that tends towards individual self preservation no matter from where or whom it is obtainable. Those who were attacked but collectively preserved their independence, appear to continue to anticipate the resumption of the wars thus making such sections completely unwilling or unable to co-operate fully with or trust fellow Yoruba men. Indeed, in their folklore they preserve stories and songs designed to abuse other Yoruba men while urging the need for themselves to be ready to fight again.<sup>3</sup> Those who had political control during the century-old civil wars or before continue to adopt an attitude that despises the others.<sup>4</sup> These various attitudes are today affecting the full realisation of Yoruba energy in the building of a strong Nigeria.

The third reason why the civil wars have continued to attract historians is that a great deal of documentary material exists for the study. During the civil wars there was a large number of educated elite, both native and foreign, who recorded eye witness accounts of the events. In addition the British Administration in Lagos also had a great amount of material in the form of despatches and reports of enquiries.

The result is that within the last 30 years or so, scholars have produced an impressive list of works on different aspects of the century long civil wars.<sup>5</sup> In seeking the causes, most scholars have discarded the previously held opinion that the wars were a scramble for the route to the coast where the natives could trade with the Europeans. They have agreed that the single major initial cause was the collapse of the mighty Oyo Empire at the tail end of the 18th century and that the 100 years of civil wars that followed were a series of scrambles by successor states anxious to wear the mantle of the Oyo Empire.



These scholars then go into details of the causes of the fall of Oyo Empire and in that they have given different explanations. Some of their explanations need to be reviewed. More than that, a number of questions should perhaps be addressed also. Why, for instance, did any of the other Yoruba kingdoms not offer to mediate in the problems that brought the Oyo Empire down? Are there any evidences to back up the claim that all the other kingdoms were fighting over who was to succeed Oyo? Are there other yet unexplored causes for the century long civil wars?

This paper will attempt basically three things. First, it will critically recapitulate the reasons hitherto given by various authors, (historians, sociologists and others) for the collapse of the Oyo Empire which is believed to be principally responsible for the Yoruba civil wars of the 19th century. Second, it will examine why all the other Yoruba kingdoms which were not immediately involved in the collapse, not only failed to arrest the chaos but also succumbed to it. Third, it will examine why, after 1840, when the successor states to Oyo had been established, the civil wars could still not be arrested by the collective efforts of the new and traditional power centres.

### **Causes of the Collapse of the Oyo Empire**

In 1796, the central administration of the Oyo Empire suddenly collapsed when, as was usual in the 18th century, the *Alaafin*, Awole, was forced to commit suicide. Two other *Alaafins*, Adebo and Maku, who attempted to succeed, found that they had no authority.<sup>6</sup> The mighty Oyo Empire started to disintegrate and, like Humpty Dumpty, could not be put together again. Scholars who have attempted to probe the remote and immediate causes of this disaster have come forth with political, constitutional, economic, social and other explanations why such an apparently powerful state should come to such a sudden end.

One important cause of the collapse of Oyo that has been mentioned by all recent authors is the intractable political imbroglio that engulfed the capital from about the mid 1730s. The rivalry itself has been seen by scholars as resulting directly from the successes of the Oyo expansionist wars. Consequent upon the success, large areas of political and economic power and influence, hitherto unallocated in the traditional constitution, became available to be shared among the ruling elites. But new constitutional arrangements were not made to regulate them. As it appeared that the *Alaafin* started to get a disproportionate share, tending to make him relatively stronger and more despotic, the *Oyo Mesi*, who formed the leaders of the army that effected the expansion, demanded their share and in the process appeared to be champions of greater freedom for the citizens.<sup>7</sup> It has also been suggested that beyond the immediate issue of power and wealth, the quarrel between the *Alaafin* and the *Oyo Mesi* may have been prompted by a genuine debate, as to how much further the empire should expand, with the military wanting to continue expansion and the commercial class wanting an atmosphere of peace within which to trade.<sup>8</sup>

The result of their disagreement was that hardly any *Alaafin* died naturally or peacefully in the 18th century as they were mostly asked to commit suicide by the *Oyo Mesi* under the leadership of the various *Basorun*.<sup>9</sup> Akinjogbin (1980) suggested that in the protracted political quarrel, all the actors initially accepted the existing constitutional framework, but that as it developed each side started to question the basis of the authority of the other and sought to change or at least amend it.<sup>10</sup> Ajayi (1974)

suggests that by the end of the 18th century, the rivalry had resulted into a shift in political power base from the *Alaafin* to the *Oyo Mesi*.<sup>11</sup>

There may have been differences of opinion on the general direction of trade. Must Oyo now encourage trading with the Europeans on the coast after their initial experience that looked like European perfidy when Oyo citizens sent to greet Europeans on the coast during Obalokun's reign were never heard of again?<sup>12</sup> Did they have any choice in directing their trading activities southwards, given the rising nationalism among the Nupe and the Bariba the immediate northern neighbours of the Yoruba?<sup>13</sup> Whatever policy was to be followed depended largely on the inclinations and abilities of the reigning *Alaafin*. It was therefore important that the *Oyo Mesi* should appoint one that would do their bidding. As it turned out, they seem to have made four choices between 1754 and 1770 that displeased them and were forced to commit suicide. Their fifth choice, Abiodun, overcame and weakened the *Oyo Mesi* in 1774 and increased the Oyo trade with the coast through Porto Novo which he turned into the principal Oyo port.<sup>14</sup>

Paradoxically, Abiodun's success over Gaha in 1774 has been seen as contributing to the eventual break-up of the Empire. In an attempt to strengthen his authority, Abiodun virtually wiped out the military class in Oyo. This not only encouraged the outlying dependencies to revolt, which they did successfully, but also weakened the defences of Oyo against internal revolt and external aggression. The successful revolt of the Bariba and the Nupe in 1783 and 1791 respectively, greatly affected Oyo's northward trade both in military wares such as horses and in other items.

There are some debates about whether and how much the slave trade affected the fate of the Oyo Empire. It may appear a little exaggerated to say that the Oyo derived their wealth largely from the export of slaves.<sup>15</sup> However, available 18th century materials indicated that the involvement of Oyo ruling classes in the slave trade steadily grew between 1750 and 1789.<sup>16</sup> Although its volume, even at its highest was small when compared with the slave trade in neighbouring West African States, it nevertheless profoundly affected Oyo society and politics. What affected the fortune of state politics is not the occupation of peasants and artisans, important as they are, but that sector of the economy on which the ruling elites depended for their power and influence. That was why the comparatively small volume of slave trade engaged in by the Oyo ruling elite, disproportionately affected the fortune of the Oyo Empire and tended to loom large in the determination of the direction of state policy.

Robin Law saw the collapse as partly the result of the involvement of the provincial chiefs in the politics of the metropolis by *Alaafin* Abiodun, when in 1774 he invited Adegolu to help him crush Gaha.<sup>17</sup> As Law correctly noted, that however, was not the first time that the provinces were being involved in the affairs of the capital. In the first place, the provincial armies had always fought alongside their metropolitan colleagues since the early 17th century when the Oyo expansion started. Second, the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo*, the General Field Marshall who controlled the Oyo army, had always lived outside the capital but was kept up to date about the events therein. Third, some, indeed many, of the wives of the *Alaafin* and of the prominent chiefs together with some of their children always lived in the rural areas.<sup>18</sup> The rural areas were therefore never really completely cut off from the capital whether in terms of commerce, politics or warfare.

Nor can one really sustain the theory of the palace in Oyo Ile being perpetually in conflict with the rest of the Empire.<sup>19</sup> True the *Alaafin's* palace was immense and to satisfy the needs of the inhabitants required tremendous input by the citizens. But the palace was also the centre of imperial administration from which orders and agents went into all parts of the empire and to which tributes, information, complaints and litigation came. It could not therefore have sustained itself for about two centuries if it was perpetually in conflict with the rest of the empire. However, there is a sense in which both Law's notion of involvement of rural populace and Lloyd's theory of conflict can be interpreted to be among valid reasons for the collapse of Oyo and we will treat that when we consider the class nature of the society.

Another major cause that has been suggested for the very sudden collapse of the Oyo administration is related to the general Yoruba constitutional provisions. A debate on this has not been taken up by scholars with seriousness.<sup>20</sup> The present author has suggested that the Yoruba kingdoms cohered together through their belief that they all came from Ife (their *orirun*) and because they all descended from Oduduwa, a fact that made them to belong to the same extended family (*ebi* system). Because Oduduwa lived and died in Ife, their *orirun*, Ife came to be given a respect which made it a sacred and eternal city which they all believed would be their final resting place when they died and which must therefore not be desecrated by military attack from any of the offspring kingdoms. The military might of Oyo had probably led its rulers into believing more in their capabilities but there is no evidence to show, as Ajayi has stated, that at the end of the 18th century the Yoruba had accepted that the might of Oyo transcended the traditional right of Ife.<sup>21</sup> The breaking of this taboo by Awole, who ordered an attack on Apomu in 1795, was the final act that made all the chiefs to renounce their allegiance to the *Alaafin*, an act that caused the final breakdown of the administration. This, as we shall also see, was a major reason why other kingdoms could not immediately contain the Oyo collapse but got involved in it.

What has not been sufficiently studied by historians when considering the causes of the collapse of Oyo is the nature of the Oyo society and how the fortunes of that society affected the fate of the Empire. Oyo would appear to be a highly structured society, with about five principal classes which were again internally divided into sub-classes. The first were the princes, the *Akeyo*, from among whom the *Alaafin* were selected, and all of whom exercised privileges which tended to put them above the laws of the land.<sup>22</sup> The second class were the chiefly families — the *Oyo Mesi* and the other chiefs. These two classes can be called the ruling class. The third class were the free-born, whose families owned land but were neither chiefly nor princely. The fourth were the slaves, whose only rights were that they could not legally be killed at will by their owners. Apart from that, they could be used and abused at will. The fifth class were those generally called *ara-oko* that is "bush men". The *ara-oko* was anybody who lived outside the metropolis, whether he was an important chief, a free born or a slave, and he was credited with less intelligence than, and looked upon with disdain by, the lowliest slave in the metropolis.<sup>23</sup>

The princely classes consisted of the *Alaafin*, the *Aremo*, his other immediate children, the children of previous *Alaafin*, and the king's slaves, who were quite often more powerful politically and socially than some of the chiefs and all the free citizens. Although slaves theoretically, and some of them were castrated so that they could not



raise families, they were not to be confused with the ordinary slaves. And as we have seen, among the *ara-oko* could be princes, chiefs, free citizens and slaves. The free citizens could be substantial farmers, traders, priests and medicinemen or they could be peasant farmers hoeing pieces of land in the family holding for subsistence.

The Oyo speaking part of the Empire was divided into four — *Ekun otun* (the provinces on the right) *Ekun asi* (the provinces in the left), the *Ibolo* (the dirt) and the *Epo* (the weeds). The names *Ibolo* and *Epo* adequately reflect how the metropolitan Oyo regarded everyone in those areas. It is not yet clear how they treated the *Ilu amona* (the conquered territories), but they probably regarded them simply as places from where to get booties.

The classes were rigid, although there could be some movements across them. A slave could purchase his freedom and become a freeman. But through the *Orile* assigned to him, his descendants would forever be remembered as off-springs of slaves. A female free citizen could marry into a princely or chiefly class and her descendants would become centres of influences for their cousins of the lower classes. A princess could marry a free citizen, but she could not thereby be controlled by her husband. She was free to move out anytime she chose or have other lovers without moving out of her marital home. She might however choose to remain faithful to the husband and have children for him. Such issues, if they become successful later in life could become princes and contest a vacancy on the throne.<sup>24</sup>

Now, the imperial expansion and the unresolved political and economic disequilibrium to which it gave rise had profound effects on each of the classes. First it affected the solidarity which should exist among the ruling classes, if they were to continue to govern and enjoy their privileges. The long squabble over who was to control which economic advantages derivable from the imperial conquests first split the ranks of the ruling classes with broadly the *Alaafin* and princes on the one side and the chiefs led by the *Basorun* on the other. The solidarity of the chiefs enabled them to reject successfully, each reigning *Alaafin* from 1735 to 1770, and force them to commit suicide.<sup>25</sup> However, when the *Alaafin* had become weakened between 1754 and 1770, and Gaha, the *Basorun* sent his own agents to all parts of the Empire, apparently without sharing with the other members of the *Oyo Mesi*, the ranks of the chiefs would appear also to have cracked. This crack within the ranks of the chiefs and the development within the other social classes which we shall soon see, enabled Abiodun to register a resounding victory for the monarchy in 1774. For the class, Abiodun's victory was a pyrrhic one. By eliminating everyone who could again stand up to him he weakened that class which was also the military leadership. Nor was the weakened class again united to govern together. This disunity in part accounts for their inability to elect an *Alaafin* after Awole's death in 1795.<sup>26</sup>

If the ruling classes were divided, decimated and weakened by the end of the 18th century, the free citizens were gradually but consistently pauperised during the whole period. Although the free citizens formed the backbone of the forces that expanded the empire, the more successful they became, the stronger the ruling class collectively became both politically and economically. The ruling class became more cruel towards the free citizens who were now called *talaka* (the poor) and who then discovered that they no longer had access to justice or even to common decent treatment to which they were entitled. Johnson gives a number of examples of citizens who were maltreated by

the various *Alaafin* in the section he titled "A succession of despotic kings"<sup>27</sup>. Even *Alaafin*'s wives of lower social classes were not immune from such cruel treatments. Up to the 1750s the monarchs were usually called to order by the *Oyo Mesi*, a situation that made them appear as champions of the people's rights. But as time went on, the *Oyo Mesi* also joined in meting out the same kind of cruel treatment to the common citizens. The examples of such treatment given by Johnson and Hethersett included beheading citizens on the flimsiest excuse or just for fun,<sup>28</sup> appropriating common citizens' wives and their property, debauching young women at puberty etc. The coarseness of life introduced by Trans-Atlantic slave trade, small as it is, did not help matters as oral traditions relate that a prince who decided to travel at night could order whole villages on his path to be set on fire (the roofs were made of grass thatch) just so that he could see clearly. The protracted rivalries among the ruling classes probably aggravated the lot of the common citizens rather than alleviate it as each faction wanted to strengthen itself against its adversaries at their expense. By the end of the 18th century, there was hardly any difference in the right of, and treatment given to free citizens and slaves.<sup>29</sup>

If Clapperton's accounts that about a third of the inhabitants of *Oyo Ile* were slaves, were to be believed, the population of slaves in *Oyo Ile* by the end of the 18th century was great.<sup>30</sup> Even if we grant exaggeration, the number would still be alarmingly large. Practically all of them were non-*Oyo* speaking. They were employed in such essential duties as rope making, tending horses, barbing and so on. If the free citizens could be so cruelly treated as has been indicated above, it is a safe guess that the slaves would be a great deal worse off.

The *ara oko* probably bore the greatest weight of metropolitan exploitation. Any member of the ruling elite, whether united at home or not, could go to any part of the empire and impose himself or herself on them. Even the metropolitan maltreated poor, free citizen once put in the provinces became a celebrity. This was in addition to the numerous agents of the rulers and the king's wives. The situation was probably not different from what the Ibadan, a century later, were doing in their conquered territories.

People so cruelly treated could hardly be expected to have confidence in the system of government under which they lived or to be loyal to their rulers. We could therefore reasonably conclude that the maintenance of the existing system would at best be a matter of indifference to them. More probably than not, they would secretly be hoping for the overthrow of such a system. Since they could not organise themselves to topple the system, the hold of tradition being too strong, they were likely to join any of the ruling factions who promised them a better deal. It is within this general framework, rather than in the involvement of the provinces for the first time in metropolitan squabbles, or in the adversary theory of the palace versus the city that we should see *Alaafin* Abiodun's approach to the provincial Chief Adeolu and the latter's willingness to oblige. In 1774, Abiodun used the general latent discontent of the oppressed free citizens, the *ara oko* and the slaves to fight members of his ruling class and won a pyrrhic victory. In 1796, Afonja again harnessed similar discontent, initially, successfully. When however he externalised the conflict in an attempt to convert the revolt into a revolution, he lost to his foreign guests — the Fulani.

But the oppressed classes long remembered and resented oppression. For instance the *Oyo* survivors who seized political power in Ibadan around 1832 completely

rejected any form of monarchical government or any kind of class division based on birth or families in their new settlement. Instead they opted for an open society where merit and ability would be the passport to leadership.<sup>31</sup> That kind of decision coming from Oyo refugees must be striking for, had they liked their former system, nothing would have been easier for them than to replicate it in their new home, as they had descendants of kings and chiefs among the settlers in Ibadan in the 1830s.

Usually among the Yoruba, when grave situations arose a third party offered to mediate, either acting on its own initiative or on the invitation of the aggrieved parties. Each Yoruba kingdom had a class of messengers (called *Iko*) who were entrusted with such duties. They were given facilities of free movement and must not be molested in any way even when they delivered unpleasant messages. Killing an *Iko* was a declaration of war on the authority that sent him.<sup>32</sup> When troubles started in Oyo, four neighbouring kingdoms appeared sufficiently influential to have offered to mediate. They were the Owu, Ife, Ijesa and Ijebu kingdoms. The first three shared common boundaries with Oyo and would be the first to feel the vibrations of any eruptions in Oyo. The Egba kingdom, another Oyo neighbour had just become independent of Oyo imperial rule, but was probably too weak yet to contemplate any mediatory role.

So far, we have no evidence that any of them offered to mediate. We do not even know enough of the internal histories of those kingdoms in the 18th century to determine whether in fact they were sufficiently internally cohesive politically to undertake such a venture. If any of them did, the attempt must have been unsuccessful. One reason for their non or unsuccessful intervention might be that the issues involved were too many, long standing and too deep rooted to be easily settled. There is however some evidence to suspect that some of these neighbouring kingdoms might not have been too enthusiastic to find solution to the Oyo problems. Certainly the newly independent Egba kingdom might have seen the Oyo problems as a providential opportunity for itself to consolidate. However, much more significant, in the failure to intervene was the attitude of Ife which might have seen the Oyo troubles as the reward of the breach of the oath not to attack Ife. For the breakdown in Oyo started almost immediately after the *Alaafin*, Awole, unsuccessfully ordered an attack on Apomu, then situated within the Ife kingdom, which no Yoruba kingdom was allowed to attack. The Ijebu got involved in upholding this *eewo*, probably because of a much more recent episode, memories of which have been preserved in Ife traditions.

Ife palace traditions relate that Osinlade Otutubiosun, *Ooni* of Ife in the late 18th and the early years of the 19th century, the reigning *Awujale* of Ijebu-Ode, probably Setejoye, and Obajanrin Majeogbe and later Abiodun, *Alaafin* of Oyo, settled a quarrel between the Ife and Oyo at a place which they called *Apimo* (we agreed together). To commemorate the agreement, Otutubiosun the *Ooni*, planted an *Ape* tree, Setejoye the *Awujale* and Abiodun the *Alaafin* each planted an *Odan* tree (Majeogbe having died before the agreement was finally reached). The trees were planted in a farm owned by one Ejesi, probably an Ife chief. After the agreement, the *Ooni* Otutubiosun stationed a man there called Laarode as his representative and market officer. The tradition goes on to explain that what the three *obas* called *Apimo* was later called Apomu.<sup>33</sup>

This tripartite agreement was probably reached between 1770 and 1774 during the early years of Abiodun's reign and it most probably concerned boundary claims between the Ife and the Oyo which the *Awujale* joined in settling. In the agreement,



Apimu later (Apomu) was conceded to Ife with full accord on all sides. If this interpretation is correct, then the *Awujale* would be angered that Oyo went back on this solemn agreement so soon after it was reached when Awole, the immediate successor to Abiodun ordered an attack on the same *Apimu* (Apomu). He might also agree with Ife, that the Oyo troubles were a just retribution and might not be too willing to offer to intervene.

Significantly, Owu was not mentioned in the tradition as participating in the Apimu agreement. Yet, Owu, rather than Ijebu shared a common boundary with Ife and Oyo around the area where the agreement was reached. Were these other three then acting against the interest of Owu or was Owu simply being ignored? Either way it is unlikely that Owu, reputedly a strong kingdom militarily, would have been pleased about the way the agreement was reached behind its back. An injured pride might prevent it also from being enthusiastic in intervening in Oyo troubles, while its relationship with Ijebu and Ife, its immediate neighbours, would be indifferent to say the least. Indeed Owu might have been watching for a favourable opportunity to show its resentment on both Ife and Ijebu.

For several reasons therefore, the Oyo imperial administration collapsed in 1796 and no good neighbours intervened to settle issues for them. The population started to flee in all directions not knowing where and when to find safety. Strong men within the empire who had the means started to reduce little areas to subjection under their own authority. Afonja became the most successful, others having died or dropped out early in the chaotic phase. Based in Ilorin, Afonja reduced large surrounding areas to subjection. For about two decades while he was engaged in the venture, there was no *Alaafin* in Oyo and as the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo*, he remained the central political figure. Unfortunately he could not assume the overall imperial leadership, because of entrenched monarchical tradition, nor did he appoint a protégé *Alaafin*.

### Causes Of The 19th Century Wars

The question then is why and how did this essentially Oyo conflict become a Pan-Yoruba problem leading to incessant civil wars throughout the 19th century?

The major explanation hitherto proffered as an answer to this question has been that with the collapse of Oyo, other kingdoms started competing among themselves to succeed to the power and influence of Oyo. This might be an adequate explanation at the initial and later post 1840 stages of the problems and if these "other kingdoms" are understood to refer strictly to those principalities within the limit of Oyo imperial authority. It is an inadequate explanation for the involvement of such other kingdoms as Ijebu, Ijesa, Ife, Owu and the Ekiti kingdoms. For there is no evidence that any of these kingdoms, some of them immediate neighbours of Oyo, sought to benefit from the Oyo misfortunes by seeking to appropriate its land or declaring war on its citizens. It would probably be more accurate to say that it was the Oyo leaders who externalised their quarrels and exported their chaos to other Yoruba kingdoms.

Between 1816 and 1825, the Oyo leaders notably Toyeye, the *Otun Kakanfo* and the *Onikoyi* took two steps in that direction. First, Afonja invited the Fulani to Ilorin<sup>24</sup> and secondly both Afonja and *Onikoyi* instigated a destructive war between Owu and its neighbours.<sup>25</sup> Let us take the Fulani issue first. It has long been recognised that Fulani

Jihadists contributed to the Yoruba civil wars of the 19th century. What has been confused is the nature and date of their intervention in Oyo. There is evidence now to correct an earlier impression that Afonja declared for the Fulani<sup>36</sup> thereby giving an impression of a Sokoto-directed Fulani attack on the Oyo Empire after they had successfully taken over the Hausa kingdoms.

What really happened was that up to 1816 the Fulani were not involved in Oyo troubles, which had been limited to Oyo elites only. However, in that year, Afonja invited to Ilorin, an itinerant Fulani preacher, Alimi, who had been intending to settle in Kuruwo after having gone round northern Oyo area for three years preaching.<sup>37</sup> Kuruwo may have been a Yoruba Islamic centre, from where Solagberu (or Solagbemi) went to join Afonja at Ilorin where he established a separate Muslim quarters, Oke Suna. Afonja was not a Muslim and probably saw Alimi as someone who could give him potent medicine for greater successes in the wars he was fighting to bring parts of former Oyo Empire under his authority. Alimi however saw the situation differently and he worked assiduously but gradually to establish a foothold for the Fulani in Yorubaland starting with Ilorin. In spite of warning from discerning lieutenants, Afonja refused to believe that Alimi could contemplate such a scheme or that he could succeed even if he did.<sup>38</sup> However, by consummate diplomacy, Alimi created distrust between Afonja and his friend, Solagberu, who were then destroyed one after the other. With the connivance of Solagberu, Afonja was killed in 1824. And with Afonja out of the way, Solagberu himself was killed about a year later. The leadership in Ilorin thus passed into the hands of the Fulani.

The second step that the Oyo leaders took was that they exported the chaos into the central and sensitive areas of Yorubaland. About 1817 on the instigation of Adegun, the *Onikoyi*, a powerful ruler in the metropolitan district of Oyo, regarded as ranking next to the *Alaafin*, and Teyeje of Ogbomoso, the *Otun Aare-Ona-Kakanfo*, the rulers of Owu attacked the kingdom of Ife. The rest of the story is so well known that it needs not delay us here. The relevant question is why, in an attempt to prevent the Oyo from being kidnapped, did the *Olowu* invade the Ife territory so massively that he only stopped short of taking Ife itself in spite of the respect for Ife's sacredness?

Perhaps part of the explanation might be that the Owu no longer seriously accepted the sacredness of Ife. Concretely it might lie in the fact that the Owu were still smarting under the slight they suffered during the Apimo episode, and saw the instigation by the two powerful Yoruba leaders as an opportunity to revenge on Ife. One might add that the concern of those powerful Oyo leaders for the safety of the Oyo rings hollow because they had not been able to guarantee that safety since 1796. However, one of the consequences of Owu's action was that the sacredness of Ife which made it immune from attack by other Yoruba kingdoms was badly dented if not destroyed. The failure of Ife to take a quick revenge did not help that image.<sup>39</sup> The undermining of the belief in the sacredness of Ife had grave consequences for stability in Yorubaland.

Under the circumstances, it was left to Ijebu which was a party to the Apimo agreement, in addition to its feelings on the sacredness of Ife, to come to the aid of Ife. Other reasons were soon found to concretise the Ife/Ijebu alliance against Owu which was besieged in 1821.<sup>40</sup> Surprisingly, the Oyo authorities on whose behalf the Owu brought war on themselves did not come to the aid of Owu. Instead the roaming Oyo refugees joined the Ife/Ijebu alliance. The point to note here is that the beginning of

civil wars in the central kingdoms of Yorubaland outside Oyo was caused by some Oyo authorities instigating civil wars in other Yoruba kingdoms rather than by Owu's or Ijebu's or Ife's ambition to succeed to Oyo imperial authority. As is well known, the Owu and the Egba kingdoms were destroyed in the process<sup>40</sup> and the consequent increase in the refugee problems spread chaos to a much wider area. The combined effects of the Owu, Egba, Ife and Ijebu involvement and the loss of Ilorin to the Fulani released latent negative behaviours in the society, such as are normal during wars. The rump of the Ijebu army that fought in the Owu War went ahead and attacked some parts of Ijebu Remo for an alleged disobedience to the *Awujale*.<sup>41</sup> The Ife army attacked the Ondo kingdom over an issue that was purely internal to Ondo and had nothing to do with Ife.<sup>42</sup> The displaced population in seeking to resettle in new environments engaged in various wars against their new neighbours; their main concern was finding secure homes, rather than succeeding Oyo.<sup>43</sup>

Between 1826 and 1840, the causes of the continuation of the civil wars also changed. The destruction of Owu and Egba kingdoms and the coup d'état at Ilorin leading to the overthrow of Afonja, produced a traumatic effect on Yoruba leaders. At that point, "the fight was tired"<sup>44</sup> as the Yoruba would say and there was a general feeling that the disagreements should be stopped, authority restored and the country united in defence against Fulani invaders. The peace conference that was summoned in Ikoyi in 1826, comprising largely Oyo speaking groups, thus had two aims: one was to bring the Yoruba together again and the other was to face the Fulani threat in unity. The first could not be achieved immediately partly because the delegates suspected that what the *Alaafin* meant by unity was a return to the *status quo ante* 1796 which they were unwilling to accept.<sup>45</sup> But the need to drive the Fulani out of Yorubaland was vigorously pursued. At the same time the Ilorin authorities under Abdul Salam who became Emir after the death of Solagberu around 1825 decided to take over the whole of Yorubaland and he sent out his armies, which consisted predominantly of Yoruba soldiers, into all directions including the Ekiti country. So one major cause of the wars during the period 1826 to 1840 was the determined attempt by the Fulani to take over the whole of Yorubaland and an equally spirited attempt by the Yoruba to drive them completely out of Yorubaland.

Between 1826 and 1840, no less than eleven battles were fought between the Oyo and Ilorin armies in pursuit of their various objectives.<sup>46</sup> In the first three, Ogele, Mugbamugba and Kanla, battles, the Oyo authorities took the initiative but could not achieve their objective. In the next three, the Ilorin took the initiative and recorded a measure of success. When however, they spread their activities to Ijesaland in the *Pole*, the seventh battle, they were badly defeated.<sup>46</sup> The battles went on in a ding dong fashion, with Oyo defeating the Ilorin in the Otefon battle and the Ilorin defeating the Oyo during the Eleduwe War, a defeat that led to the evacuation of Oyo-Ile. Finally in 1840, the Ibadan army decisively defeated the Ilorin army at Osogbo.<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps the greatest disadvantage which the Yoruba had during all these encounters was that they were never really united against the Fulani rulers of Ilorin. At every turn, the Fulani were able to befriend prominent Yoruba warriors and to persuade them to fight on their side or at worst remain neutral at critical times.<sup>48</sup> This was in addition to large numbers of Yoruba leaders already permanently in Ilorin. For instance in the Gbodo battle, waged by Oluewu soon after his accession the ruler of Ikoyi, the ruler



of Ago-Oja (later Oyo) and Atiba (later *Alaafin*) fought on the side of Ilorin against the Yoruba.<sup>48</sup> And in the Eleduwe war, a substantial portion of Oyo contingents refused to fight at the battle front.<sup>49</sup> The Yoruba started being successful when they came under a unified political and military command in Ibadan.

While these wars to prevent further Fulani penetration in Yorubaland were going on between 1826 and 1840, other local wars continued, specifically by new polities to consolidate themselves in their new environments. Ibadan and Abeokuta that were founded after the destruction of Owu and Old Egba kingdoms had to create safe environment for themselves. Ibadan consolidated early and by 1835 was already settled. Abeokuta took a little more time, fighting the Ijebu and the Egba. By 1840 they appeared to have settled although they still had the Dahomey threat to contend with. The local wars they fought however constituted part of the pool of Yoruba wars in the 19th century.

From 1840 to 1886, the causes of the Yoruba civil wars were related to the struggle by the emergent polities for hegemony in Yorubaland, the need to prevent the Fulani from further penetrating into Yorubaland, the imperial expansion of Ibadan and the struggle for freedom from Ibadan imperial control. These causes have been exhaustively discussed and can be summarised.<sup>50</sup> After 1845, Ibadan and Ijaye started to rival each other as to which was going to be the Oyo power. New Oyo joined whichever side appeared willing to serve its interest. Ijaye lost in the struggle and was destroyed in 1860. Before then Ibadan had established its presence in most of Osun, Ife and Ekiti areas of Yorubaland. The destruction of Ijaye frightened the Egba, who had joined Ijaye in the final battle, and the Ijebu who had not joined. They therefore started to accuse Ibadan of wanting to be "the master of the whole world" an accusation that Ibadan's behaviour justified. They therefore sought all means to prevent Ibadan from getting stronger by preventing it from having easy and direct access to the seacoast where it could get firearms. This was why the British administration thought the wars were fought for the control of the road to the coast.

After 1865, the Ibadan dependencies in Ife, Ijesa and Ekiti started to get uncomfortable under Ibadan yoke. What had started partly as an attempt to prevent them from being subjugated by the Fulani at Ilorin had become subjugation to Ibadan which they resented. In 1877, they revolted and fought Ibadan to a stalemate. A peace treaty signed in 1886 brought peace to all sides and independence to the Ibadan tributaries. The war camps were however not broken up until 1893.

## Notes and References

1. Perhaps the most important of these is Oyo-Ile now turned into a forest reserve; but there are a large number of others in Oyo north area, usually referred to as *ahoro* (abandoned site). Dr. S.O. Babayemi spent some years studying some of these sites; he has now published his findings in S.O. Babayemi: "Oyo Ruins" in *African Notes* Vol. 5 no. 1 1968-69 (University of Ibadan).
2. Perhaps the one that keeps reminding us of the problem is the Modakeke/Ife problem. But there are others in Ejigbo, Ogbomoso, Ada, Ikere in Ekiti etc.
3. Various Ijesa folksongs, which are still popularly sung at festivals, depict this

feeling. Some examples are given in the keynote address. See also Dr. Ilesanmi (ch. 40)

4. Various Oyo speaking sayings and songs depict this attitude. See Oladeji, S.O., (ch. 39)
5. The literature is impressive but only four will be mentioned here: they include Biobaku, S.O., *The Egba and their neighbours* (O.U.P.) 1957; Mabogunje, A & Omer-Cooper: *The Owu kingdom* (Ibadan University Press) 1971; Akintoye, S.A: *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland* (Longman) Awe, S.B.: *The Rise of Ibadan* D. Phil (Oxford) 1964 Law R: *The Oyo Empire 1680–1840* (C.U.P.); Akinjogbin, I.A: "Prelude to the Yoruba Civil Wars of the 19th Century" in *Odu: University of Ife Journal of African Studies* Vol. 1 No. 2 1965; Ajayi J.F.A and Smith R.S.: *Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century* (Cambridge and Ibadan) 1964; Ajayi, J.F.A: "The Aftermath of the fall of Old Oyo" in Ajayi & Crowder (Eds.): *History of West Africa Vol. II* (Longmans 1974); Johnson, S: *History of the Yorubas* (Lagos) 1956.
6. Johnson S.; *History of the Yorubas* (Lagos) 1956 pp. 188–196; Akinjogbin I.A: "The Expansion of Oyo and the Rise of Dahomey 1600–1800" in Ade Ajayi, J.F. & Crowder (eds.) *History of West Africa Vol. 1* (Longman) 1971 p. 342, Akinjogbin, I.A & Ayandele, E.A: "Yorubaland up to 1800" in Ikime O. (ed): *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (H. E. B.) 1980 p. 139; "The Prelude to the Yoruba civil wars" in *ODU University of Ife Journal of African Studies* Vol. 1 No. 2 1965 pp. 34 – 35.
7. Ajayi, J.F.A.: "The Aftermath of the fall of old Oyo" in Ajayi, J.F.A & Crowder (eds). *History of West Africa Vol. II* (Longman), 1974 pp. 131–141; Akinjogbin I.A. & Ayandele E.A. *op. cit.* pp 134–141.
8. "The Prelude....." in *ODU Vol. 1 No. 2* 1965 pp. 24–26.
9. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 168–193.
10. Akinjogbin, I.A. and Ayandele E.A: "Yorubaland up to 1800" in Ikime O, *Ground Work...* p. 138.
11. Ajayi, J.F.A: "The Aftermath..." in Ajayi & Crowder: *History of West Africa Vol. II* p. 138.
12. Johnson, S: *History* p. 168.
13. In 1783, the part of Bariba under Oyo Ile successfully revolted. In 1791, the Nupe part under Oyo also revolted successfully. See Akinjogbin I.A: *Dahomey and Its Neighbours 1708–1818* (C.U.P. 1967). p 164 & p. 175. Dalzel A: *The History of Dahomey and Inland Kingdom of Africa* (London, 1793) p.229.
14. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 178–182.
15. In a number of publications, I have suggested that the slave trade had some debilitating effects on Oyo. Ajayi however does not believe that the trade was sufficiently important to affect Oyo politics either way. See Akinjogbin, I.A. and Ayandele, E.A. "Yorubaland up to 1800" in Ikime O (ed) *Ground work ...* pp 121–143.
16. Documentary evidences available both at the Public Records Office in London and the National Archives in Paris indicate Oyo's growing participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the second half of the 18th century, through the port of Porto Novo. This is confirmed by Abiodun, the *Alaafin* of Oyo, 1770–1789, when he called Porto Novo his "calabash, out of which no one but himself was

- permitted to eat". See Dalzel A: *A History of Dahomey*: p. 196.
17. Law R.C.C: *The Oyo Empire 1600–c 1836* (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1977). pp 252–255.
  18. See for instance: Johnson, S: *History* pp. 274–275. Atiba's action was neither the first nor unique.
  19. Lloyd, P.C: "The structure of African kingdoms: An exploratory Model" in A.S.A. Monograph London 1965 pp 63 – 108.
  20. There is a nebulous but loud resistance to the concept of *ebi* system, but no academic argument based on evidence has yet been adduced to discredit it.
  21. Ajayi, J.F.A: "The Aftermath of the fall of Oyo Empire" in Ajayi and Crowder: *A History of West Africa* Vol. II of 168 – 187.
  22. For how the ruling class behaved in Oyo in the later part of the 18th century, See Johnson, S., *History*, pp. 168–187.
  23. There are many sayings in Yoruba which show the disdain in which the *ara-oko* were held.
  24. Afonja is a ready example.
  25. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 174–182.
  26. Two *Alaafin*, Adebo and Maku, were elected between 1795 and 1796. After that there was a long interregnum, which may have lasted up to 20 years. See Johnson *History* pp. 192, 196: Also Law R.C: *The Oyo Empire* pp. 246–248.
  27. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 170–181.
  28. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 180–181: *Iwe Kika Ekerin* (C.M.S., Lagos 1937) pp. 61–62.
  29. Some of the grumblings of the citizens during this period have survived in *Ijala* (hunters' poems).  
 One says:       *A so aguntan meji mo igbo*  
                       *Omo onile de, o tu ikan lo'.*  
                       *Eemo kini a ri yi?*
- Freely translated it means", two sheep were tethered to graze in the bush, a member of the ruling class took one away with impunity. What a disaster?"
30. Hugh Clapperton: *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa* (London, 1829) p. 34
  31. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 244–245; One line in the *oriki* of Ibadan describes the people as "Omo Fadeya" (i.e. those who tear crowns).
  32. A Yoruba proverb says "Ise a ran iko kii pa iko" (i.e. An ambassador is not killed for delivering a message sent through him).
  33. Ife Palace Records.
  34. Ahmad ibn Abu Batr (Abu Ikokoro): "Talif Akhbar al-gurum Min Umara' bilad Ilorin" (Ilorin) 1912,
  35. Johnson, S: *History* pp 206–207.
  36. See Akinjogbin, I.A: "The Prelude..." in ODU Vol. 1 no. 2 p. 33 where the impression is given.
  37. Ahmad ibn Abu Bakr "Talif..."
  38. Ahmad ibn Abubakr "Talif...", Johnson, S: *History* p. 198.
  39. Johnson, S: *History* p. 207.



40. Biobaku, S.O.: *The Egba* ch. 1
41. Biobaku, S.O.: *The Egba* ch. 41
42. Adediran, A.A....in ch. 13  
Oshin V.O.: in ch. 4
43. The Oyo in Ibadan, the Egba in Abeokuta as well as various groups in Osun area indulged in all kinds of local wars.
44. This is a Yoruba expression ("*aare mu ija*") used, when parties in a quarrel are perceived to want a third party to intervene for settlement.
45. Johnson, S: *History* p. 211, Johnson implies that the immediate cause of this Conference was Hugh Clapperton's remonstrance with "several powerful chiefs in the country".
46. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 200–205; 218–220, 263–268, 285–288.
47. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 285 – 288.
48. Rev. Johnson, S. gives too many examples in his book. "*The History of the Yoruba*" Even Atiba, who became the first *Alaafin* at New Oyo, was at one time on the side of Ilorin against his future subjects. That episode in his life has been preserved in *oriki* thus: *Atiba ti o go go go*  
*Ti o re'le Ilorin re e kogbon.*  
(Atiba, who is so stupid as to go to Ilorin to learn wisdom) See. Johnson, S *History* pp. 260–261.
49. Johnson, S: *History* pp. 266–267
50. Ajayi, J.F.A. & Smith, R.S.: *Yoruba Warfare In the 19th Century* (Cambridge University Press 1964). Akintoye S.A: *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland*.

## Chapter Twelve

# Fundamental Causes of the 19th Century Yoruba Wars

J.F. Ade Ajayi

In the chapter entitled "The Aftermath of the Fall of Old Oyo" in Vol.11 of the Longman *History of West Africa* (ed. Ajayi and Crowder), it was suggested that although Yorubaland did not constitute a single political entity, it constituted a political system built around the ideology of a common origin of all Yoruba *obas* at Ife, and the military power of the Old Oyo Empire; that the 19th century wars were essentially a chain reaction following not only the military decline of the Old Oyo Empire but the total collapse of the Old Oyo monarchy; and that the fundamental issue that needs to be explained is this collapse of the monarchy that had lasted some three centuries. It was this collapse that can explain why the revolt of *Kakanfo* Afonja became uncontrollable, why the ritual suicide of Awole, Adebo and Maku in quick succession led to an interregnum of almost 20 years after which the restoration of the monarchy became virtually impossible.

I have suggested that the external factors which used to form the basis of explanation — the involvement of Oyo chiefs in the slave trade and the intervention of Fulani Jihadists — cannot fully explain this internal collapse of the Old Oyo monarchy; that the collapse was not sudden and that a careful reading of Samuel Johnson's narrative shows that no *Alaafin* of the 18th century died a natural death; that only Ojigi at the beginning of the century and Abiodun at the end can be regarded as significant rulers; that gradually the real military and political leaders became the *Basorun* such as Yau Yamba, Jambu and Gaha, and the *Kakanfo* and other *Eso* such as Oyabi and Afonja; and that the effort of Abiodun to stem the tide proved worse than unsuccessful.

The challenge in this paper is to attempt to go beyond these causes and to seek for "fundamental causes", that is to say to go beyond the main historical events and try to identify fundamental issues that might explain the chain of events. That leads us into speculative and philosophical explanations which some will regard as outside the purview of historians and others will hail as the only effort worthy of the attention of serious historians. The inevitability with which one war provoked another, the helplessness of mortals as they wished to retain control over the events and yet saw again and again their hopes on lasting peace come to naught until the external power of the new gods, foretold in fables and Ifa prescriptions, had to be invoked. Such events certainly call for a search for fundamental causes. A few lines of inquiry are suggested.

### Demography

That perhaps in spite of the slave trade, the population of Yorubaland had been rising to a point of explosion relative to available agricultural technology, of slaves from

outside, and a century or more of absence of devastating internal wars; that this increased the tension in the metropolitan province of Oyo and other places, and helps to explain the degree of urbanisation, the resulting population explosion, the pressure of desperate migrants on settled communities, the rise of total warfare, destruction and abandonment of some sites and the cultivation of other larger areas hitherto neglected for settlement purposes.

### **Class Analysis**

Until the 18th century, politics in Old Oyo was in terms of competition between the major families (principally those of the *Oyo Mesi*) severally and collectively, and with their allies in the provinces against the families of the *Alaafin*. The rise of the cavalry force, and the professionalisation of the military which it encouraged, deepened class distinctions that cut across the old family rivalries. The rivalry between supporters of the power that was based in the old established families, and supporters of the shift of power to the hands of the new professional warriors had an economic dimension, but in no clearly specific manner some of the warriors were more interested in a northern policy protecting the sources of horses, while others were more interested in the southern trade and access to European goods.

### **Mode of Production**

Perhaps the growing pressure of population and the increasing class distinctions were further complicated by the growing inadequacies of the political economy based on household production and the export slave trade. The clear trend in the 19th century was for the warrior to keep his slaves as cheap labour for farming, and for producing and transporting palm oil and kernels. The transition from household as the basic unit of production to capture slaves for export, to one in which every household aspired to own slaves or be part of extended families that owned slaves was a feature of the 19th century wars.

### **Aborted Rebirth**

From time to time, societies seek rebirth and restructuring. This starts from widespread disillusionment in the existing religious, social, economic and political arrangements. Internal population pressure, external threats or interventions suggesting alternative routes and new models could produce revolutionary factors which became uncontrollable and gather momentum of their own. A society that retains control of its own destiny would still emerge from such turmoil with major structural changes and some new consensus as the basis for social interaction in the future. The Yoruba in the 19th century were in such a ferment of revolution that the old norms and consensus were being challenged; Ifa was in certain cases advising conversion to Islam and predicting the coming of the whiteman. However, before resolving the crisis and evolving a new consensus, they temporarily lost control over their destiny. They appear to have been caught up in a cross current of ideas and pressures which ultimately frustrated this chance for a new rebirth and ended in an internal stalemate under a colonial regime.



## **Conclusion**

Detailed research along some of these paths might reveal new data and deepen our knowledge. However, speculative history always leaves the little corner of doubt in the mind of the historian: What produced the collapse of the fabric that held the Oyo monarchy together, and led to such hatreds and bitter wars that even now, a century of peace later, the echoes of discord and rivalry can hardly be said to have died down? We may never know for certain.

## Chapter Thirteen

# Derin Ologbenla: The *Ooni*-elect of Ife during the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War

A.A. Adediran

The major events leading to hostilities in 19th century Yorubaland as well as the socio-political consequences of the hostilities are now fairly well-known.<sup>1</sup> But it is only recently that some serious attempt is being made to examine the personages involved in various stages of the hostilities. Even this has been concentrated on the military leaders on the war fronts and quite often the roles of the civil chiefs who in most cases, constituted the 'rear commanders' have been glossed over.

One danger in this approach is a superficial understanding of the underlying policy that guided the war efforts, the alignments and re-alignments and the diplomacy that accompanied the peace moves. Apparently passive in comparison with the leaders in the fronts, the civil chiefs were basically the policy makers and often dictated the pace at which the war progressed. They had significant input into the decisions about the alliances to be made or broken; when to sue for peace and when to frustrate peace moves. It was, for instance, the collaboration of the civil chiefs with the agents of the Lagos government that made the signing of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo Peace Treaty a reality. It was also the attitude of these civil chiefs that explain why, even when the war leaders in the main battle front at Igbajo/Imesi-Ile had signed the treaty in September 1886, the war dragged on till the 1890s. This chapter attempts to examine the contributions of Derin Ologbenla, the *Ooni*-elect of Ife, one of the prominent personalities in Yorubaland during the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War years. The *Ooni*-elect was generally recognised as wielding considerable influence in both the war and peace efforts from c.1878.<sup>2</sup>

The nature of sources available for our reconstruction makes 'Derin's childhood and early adult life fairly difficult to reconstruct. What we have are mainly personal impressions of his immediate descendants based on observations made in the last years of his life. Although some amount of information can be gleaned from his personal praise-poems (*oriki*),<sup>3</sup> these record mainly his later life career and principally achievements at Oke-Igbo, rather than his early life career.

His full name was Aderinsoye, often abbreviated as Aderin or 'Derin. The surname, Ologbenla, (one who has a deep wound) is a cognomen derived as a result of his valiant warring activities.<sup>4</sup> He was born into the Giesi ruling family which was constituted from the Ogboru Ruling House.<sup>5</sup> By the time of Derin, members of the Giesi lineage had come to be generally regarded as hardy, stubborn and reliable in times of crisis.<sup>6</sup>

Derin must have been born in the early years of the 19th century. Henry Higgins, one of the Commissioners sent to make peace in the Yoruba country by the British Administration in Lagos, saw him on 4 November 1886 and reported that he was a very

old man.<sup>7</sup> Traditions recall that he spent his early years under the tutelage of two of his elder brothers, Eniola and Adegbinsonye Kumbusu who was *Ooni* from 1849 to 1878. Extant oral traditions recall that at the time of the Owu War (c.1821–c.1825) he was considered too young to join the Ife contingent, though he was precocious and "too big for his age". He however, absconded from home and joined the contingents all the same. If the account that he distinguished himself in that war is to be accepted, then 'Derin must have been in his late teens or early twenties by the time the Owu War ended.

His personal appearance can now only be conjectured from bits of information retained by members of his extended family<sup>8</sup> and from observations by late 19th century writers who met him personally.<sup>9</sup> He appeared to have a sharp intelligent look, lively sense of humour and vivacious gait. These traits gave him a prominent place among his contemporaries in comparison with whom he is remembered as having a protective posture on account of which "even some of his senior brothers called him father." Somewhat quick tempered, Derin very early in life had a clear foresight and more than an average perception of the issues of the time and appeared determined to restore to Ife the glory which he believed the city had before the 19th century holocaust. Those who met Derin later in life reported him as being shrewd and a little tight-fisted. The Chiefs of Ondo despised him on account of this<sup>10</sup> and Henry Higgins reported that Derin was the only chief in the interior of Yorubaland 'who neither offered hospitality nor presents to people.'<sup>11</sup> Among his contemporaries were prominent Ife warriors such as Lamiloye, Lasa, Kugbaigbe, Okudubi, Oga, Bambe Isoja and Apete who have remained unstudied by modern historians. That Derin rose to prominence even before he was selected as *Ooni* must be due to his personal qualities and his birth to an Ife royal family which marked him out as a suitable material in a high traditional society during a revolutionary period.

Thus unlike many of the well-known heroes of the 19th century wars who had lowly backgrounds and who were considered as upstarts in the traditional social reckoning, 'Derin had a noble and royal birth. But his activities during his life time particularly from c.1878 when he had retired from active military campaigns marked him out as a unique personality that should be considered a hero of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War alongside well-known figures like Latoosa, Ogedengbe, and Fabunmi.

'Derin's first exposure to war is remembered to be his participation in the Owu War against the caution of his parents and elder brothers. There, in spite of his relatively young age, he distinguished himself and was chosen to lead a contingent of Ife troops that carried out mop up operations in the periphery of the Ife kingdom adjoining the Owu territory. He must have carried out this assignment impressively for, from then, he gained the attention of the *Ooni* and his chiefs, rising to become, by the time of Adegunle Abewela who was *Ooni* in the 1840s, one of the most important state advisers on military affairs. Nevertheless, it is claimed that 'Derin did not have personal ambitions for a military career. He is remembered as having attempted to settle down to big time farming at Kosere with "about 160 slaves, many sheep and goats which were booties collected during the Owu War."<sup>12</sup> But against the background of the earlier brilliant military successes, it is hardly a surprise that 'Derin served in a series of military campaigns on behalf of the *Ooni*. Indeed, one issue that becomes clear from 'Derin's early life is that his later career as a statesman was mapped out by the fact that it coincided with a period when various kinds of conflicts and tension hitherto latent



in the body politic of the Yoruba were gradually reaching a climax. The direct consequences of these political crises were that 'Derin could not be as apolitical as his traditional biographers tend to make him. By the mid-19th century, the situation in the Ife region was so tense that a warrior-leader of 'Derin's calibre could not keep a low profile. For instance, frequent skirmishes were recorded between the Ife and the Ijesa. The Ife side of the story<sup>13</sup> alleges that Ife traders who frequented Ijesa market towns and farm steads in the vicinity of Ile-Ife were kidnapped and often sold into slavery. Furthermore, it is claimed that Ijesa troops frequently encroached on Ife territory with the Owa's messengers harassing Ife farmers. Whatever the details, the clear indication is that of a worsening of relations. Events degenerated rapidly culminating in the Isorogi War in which 'Derin was given overall command of Ife troops for the first time. It was shortly after this dispute that 'Derin was called upon again on an assignment to Ondo, Ife's neighbour to the southeast.

An internal dispute in Ode-Ondo had resulted in the expulsion of the *Osemawe* Arilekolasi who apparently appealed to the *Ooni* for some assistance.<sup>14</sup> Consequently an Ife contingent led by 'Derin occupied Oke-Igbo, an Ondo farmstead and from there sacked Ode-Ondo. It does not appear however that this open act of aggression represented the official policy of the Ife chiefs. 'Derin appeared to have taken the decision to sack the town on his own as the specific instruction of the Ife chiefs was that he should only reconcile the *Osemawe* with his people. The anti-official policy taken by 'Derin is a reflection of an internal conflict within the Ife polity itself. By c. 1845 when the expedition took place, 'Derin was already very popular in Ile-Ife being at the head of a radical group of youths who believed that, in the spirit of the time, Ife should embark on a military programme of expansion. In fact, 'Derin was already a rallying point of malcontent against the *Ooni* and the older chiefs, and there may be some substance in the allegation that the Ondo assignment was a ploy meant to liquidate him. 'Derin himself saw it as an opportunity to extricate himself from the complex web of Ife local politics and probably decided to set himself up at Oke-Igbo with a demonstration of force to indicate his independence of both the *Ooni* and the *Osemawe*.

But it does not appear that 'Derin had full control of the Oke-Igbo settlement in its early years. The population of the settlement increased rapidly as it became a haven for disgruntled elements from Ife, Owu, Ibadan, Ijebu, Ijesa and indeed from all over Yorubaland. Most of these were youngmen sworn to a life of restlessness and occasional acts of brigandage. Although a colonial creation of Ife warriors, the settlement quickly took over the Ibadan republican chieftaincy system, jettisoning the monarchical system favoured by the founding Ife group. Thus in place of 'Derin, it was Ojo Kugbaigbe, the *Aare* and a relation of *Ooni* Abeweila that was chosen as the first *Baale*.<sup>15</sup>

That it was a relative of the *Ooni* with whom 'Derin was at logger-heads that was chosen as the first *Baale* is an indication of the Ife authorities, desire to curtail the influence of 'Derin and possibly an indictment of his over-zealousness in dealing with the Ondo. It is claimed that 'Derin was not *Baale* because as an Ife prince he had the aspiration of becoming *Ooni*. This does not fully explain the issue, for following Kugbaigbe's death in c. 1854, 'Derin assumed the *Baaleship* in addition to the royal title of *Soko-Ninu* of the Giesi family. But even when he withdrew his interests in the leadership of Oke-Igbo, 'Derin was its effective ruler as the *Balogun* to whom the elderly

*Baale* looked for guidance.

There is no doubt that the occupation of Oke-Igbo increased 'Derin's influence and soon catapulted him into a wider leadership position. When the *Ooni* Abeweila died in c. 1849, the Ife had expected Derin to ascend the throne. However, he refused the pressure of the Ife chiefs and instead sponsored the candidature of 'Degbin Kumbusu, apparently the most senior eligible candidate from the Giesi family. In this, 'Derin was quite calculating; grooming himself to become a more effective ruler. Ife was then within the Ibadan Empire and his assumption of the *Ooniship* would compromise his military activities which he saw as the only way of dealing with Ibadan effectively. Furthermore, a firm military hold on Oke-Igbo was necessary to prevent the Ondo avenging the sack of their town. The Ondo had proved irrepressible and had taken to a series of guerilla activities in a bid to reoccupy their town. But most important in 'Derin's refusal to be *Ooni* in c.1850 was the desire to consolidate his position vis-à-vis the Ibadan. At Oke-Igbo, 'Derin commanded the allegiance of the Ife and neighbouring settlements. Without being *Ooni*, he was virtually the most powerful and influential individual in the kingdom. Events within Ile-Ife itself soon elevated 'Derin into the leadership role which he was reluctant to play. Shortly after the installation of Kumbusu, the city was sacked by the Modakeke and the *Ooni* fled into exile in Isoya. Thenceforth, the Ife looked on 'Derin as their ruler in preference to Kumbusu who was given the opprobrious name "Gbadegodi."

Within the capital city, the crisis which accompanied the sack of the town, had negatively affected the royalty. The privileges which traditionally were the prerogatives of the *Ooni* had been usurped by the nobility who were constantly warring among themselves, further aggravating the pitiable condition of the kingdom. With the advent of Ibadan imperialism, the powers of the *Ooni* had been usurped by Ibadan agents stationed in various parts of the old kingdom. The authority of Ife chiefs had been replaced by petty imperial administrations set up by the Ibadan in the outlying settlements of Edunabon, Moro, Ipetumodu, Gbongan, Ikire, Apomu and even Modakeke adjacent to Ile-Ife. To extricate Ife from this problem, Kumbusu the *Ooni*, advocated a peaceful settlement and a rapprochement with Ibadan. While the *Ooni's* approach could lead to a resettlement of the Ife in exile and a restoration of peaceful relations with Modakeke, it could never win for Ife her settlements already taken over by the Ibadan. Indeed it would strengthen Ibadan further. As opposed to this peaceful approach, 'Derin advocated a militant one which appealed to the younger elements. 'Derin thus became the centre of opposition.

This conflicting perception of the problems led to the emergence of two camps. There were the old chiefs and the *Ooni* "who did not want to die in exile and wanted to be buried at home."<sup>16</sup> This group was so desperate about returning home that they did not mind the Modakeke keeping their wives and children that were taken during the sack of the town as captives.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, there were the younger elements headed by 'Derin who wanted a war to end all wars.

On a purely theoretical ground, it may be argued that the chiefs' approach was the more realistic one. Ife had no strong army to embark on the type of independence the radical elements sought. Her military successes of late, the euphoria of which appears to have spurred the radical elements on, were not the accomplishment of Ife troops *per se* but that of an army of Ife leaders backed mainly by non-Ife troops. In any case, since

the chiefs and the *Ooni* were in agreement, they compelled their views on the populace for which the *Ooni* was again marked down as "cruel and wicked." Eventually, when the Ife in exile were brought back home in 1854, it was at a price, just as the youths had predicted for thenceforth, Ibadan expected Ife to contribute to all her war efforts.<sup>18</sup>

It is against the background of this complex network of local politics that 'Derin's activities during the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War years should be examined.

On the eve of the outbreak of hostilities between the Ibadan and the Ekiti, the cream of Ife troops led by Ojaja Ayikiti, son of Kumbusu, the reigning *Ooni*, was part of an Ibadan contingent sacking Egba farms. This was almost certainly against the wish of the generality of Ife citizens who never took kindly to their troop sacking the Egba farms on behalf of Ibadan and who condemned both the *Ooni* and his son for it. In fact, while Ayikiti was leading an Ife contingent to contribute to Ibadan<sup>19</sup> from mid-1877 through 1878, various contingents from Oke-Igbo, some led by 'Derin's sons, encamped at different locations in Ife territory to waylay Ibadan caravans and kidnap the traders, using the Oke-Igbo-Mahin creek route. In the same move, the Modakeke and "like-minded people" were expelled from Oke-Igbo.<sup>20</sup> This lack of co-ordination in Ife politics was to characterise the participation of Ife throughout the early phase of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War.

Nevertheless, in 1877 the radical Ife youths still nursed the hope that the affairs would be straightened out, with the death of Kumbusu whom they expected to be succeeded by 'Derin. When they were disappointed, they blamed it on 'Derin's lack of interest in the affairs of the monarchy and a selfish commitment to military exploits. But this was not the main reason why 'Derin did not succeed Kumbusu. The fact is that in their calculations, and scheming, the youths made one vital mistake. They were too radical to take adequate cognisance of the Ibadan factor in the selection process of the *Ooni*. Thus, though they totally rejected Ayikiti's candidature for the Ife throne, Aare Latoosa eventually secured his installation to further consolidate Ibadan influence in the area.

If indeed 'Derin adopted a nonchalant attitude about the affairs of the monarchy, he was certainly not neutral in local politics. Derin himself abhorred Ibadan's overlordship of Ife and certainly cast his lot with the radical elements. There are in fact indications that he gave some encouragement to their activities particularly those against the Modakeke. At the start of hostilities, the anti-Ibadan feeling in Ife was so strong that enormous pressure was brought to bear on *Ooni* Ayikiti not to join forces with the Ibadan against the Ekiti or at least to maintain a dignified neutrality. The *Ooni* in response began a campaign of calumny against the Ibadan in a bid to warm himself into the heart of his people. In addition, he made it clear that he would, under no circumstance, give support to Ibadan and apparently began to whip up anti-Ibadan sentiments in other Yoruba kingdoms.<sup>21</sup> In response to *Ooni* Ayikiti's moves, some Yoruba *oba*, particularly the *Awujale* of Ijebu-Ode made attempts to resolve the Modakeke issue in order that the Ife-Modakeke block might solidly throw their weight behind the Ekitiparapo.

Nevertheless, when the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War commenced in earnest in 1878, Ife troops were within the Ibadan camp. The reasons for this are to be found in the personal interests of Ayikiti. The *Ooni* was personally indebted to the Ibadan leader, Aare Latoosa, who, against the advice of Ibadan chiefs, had insisted on his being chosen *Ooni*.



With the personal involvement of the *Aare*, the *Ooni* now found it difficult to pitch camp against Ibadan, as that would mean fighting against his mentor. What finally decided the issue was however not just the *Ooni's* personal friendship with the *Aare* but the precarious position he was in, in the intricate network of Ife politics. The *Ooni* Ayikiti never trusted his chiefs who were in league with the radical youths and who continually criticised him as an impostor. Fearing a possible attempt to remove him forcibly, he preferred not to work against the interest of the Ibadan whose support he was sure of as long as the *Aare* was alive.

Furthermore, there was the 'Derin Ologbenla factor. There is no doubt that at the time, 'Derin was the strong man of Ife politics. His reputation easily dwarfed that of the *Ooni*. Even the *Ooni's* chiefs preferred to deal with 'Derin rather than with the *Ooni*. In all respects, 'Derin was at the centre of opposition against Ayikiti's rulership. Since 'Derin was himself a *Soko* and a military leader with a large following, the only way by which the *Ooni* could remove the danger he constituted, was to discredit him by working against his known personal interests and setting the *Aare* against him in the hope that he would be destroyed by the Ibadan.

Though the *Ooni* Ayikiti declared for Ibadan, it was clear even to the casual observer that it was against the desire of the Ife. Ibadan authorities realised this and recognising 'Derin as the strong man of Ife politics, by-passed the *Ooni* to make overtures to him in an attempt to prevent him from allying with the Ekiti. These overtures probably predated the outbreak of armed hostilities for it is claimed that in 1877, the *Aare* before imposing Ayikiti, first offered the throne to 'Derin who declined.<sup>22</sup> Instead, 'Derin had made known his resolution to join hands with the Ekiti *Oba* to "check the Ibadans who were ravaging the whole world."<sup>23</sup>

Thus, 'Derin's activities even while the Ife were officially within the Ibadan camp, were not favourable to the Ibadan war efforts. In fact, his attitude which obviously had the blessing of the chiefs resident in Ile-Ife made the situation very grave for the Ibadan. First, 'Derin allowed the Ijebu, who were anti-Ibadan, to operate with a free hand in the Ife territory. This operation initially took the form of occasional acts of brigandage but was soon transformed into effective road blocks mounted by different detachments of Ijebu army assisted by Ife soldiers. Efforts made by Ibadan authorities to lure 'Derin to make the road safe were unsuccessful. Second, 'Derin made attempts to form a coalition against Ibadan, capitalising on the goodwill of the *Awujale* of the Ijebu and the Ekiti *oba*. For instance, for most of 1878, his envoys joined those of the Ekitiparapo to canvass for support among the non-belligerent states.<sup>24</sup> This had the significant effect of strengthening anti-Ibadan feelings particularly among the Ekitiparapo whose strategy was now to isolate Ibadan. Third, 'Derin wanted to form a coalition of neighbouring towns against Modakeke. But these towns having taken on substantial Oyo refugees<sup>25</sup> looked at the Modakeke as their kith and kin and were suspicious of any move against the Modakeke. They not only refused to join the coalition, but also leaked the plan to Ibadan. Lastly, 'Derin began to work relentlessly to see that the *Ooni* changed his position and withdraw Ife troops from the Ibadan camp at Igbajo. For this he brought the alliance of the radical youths and chiefs into work. There are indications that this alliance effected the death of Ayikiti.<sup>26</sup>

The Ibadan were aware of the danger posed by the 'Derin factor, but all the recorded overtures made to him up till 1880 met with stiff rebuff. For this, the Ibadan chiefs

blamed the *Aare* who had imposed Ayikiti in defiance of the wishes of the Ife chiefs and the reality of the time. It appeared that the *Aare* himself accepted this change. Thus with the death of Ayikiti, he quickly moved to mend the broken fences and win the support of 'Derin by asking him to be *Ooni*. So determined was the *Aare* that on one occasion, he sent two slaves to Ile-Ife to rebuild the palace and at the same time sent as many as 40 slaves "to beg him (Derin) to come and reign and to put a stop to such complicated state of things"<sup>27</sup> which occasioned the Yoruba ancestral home to be left desolate after 1882.

'Derin's attitude in the early years of his selection as *Ooni* has been an enigmatic one to understand. He accepted to be *Ooni* but refused against the insistence of the Ife chiefs and the persistent appeal of Ibadan leaders to be crowned or to move from Oke-Igbo into the city. More bizarre was his reaction to the on-going Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War. Although he believed that the Ekitiparapo was the justly aggrieved of the combatants, he refused to withdraw Ife troops from the Ibadan camp. Rather he now began to counsel that Ife should stand clear of the hostilities.

One ostensible reason for this change of attitude is that as *Ooni-elect*, 'Derin probably interpreted his perceived role in the on-going hostilities as that of a father to the warring parties. Furthermore, by 1880, the major grudges which the Ife had against Ibadan had been removed. Ayikiti was already dead; but the Ife still wanted to avenge his imposition by destroying Modakeke. This, the *Ooni-elect* did not favour, bringing some complications which made the chiefs to procrastinate in his installation rituals.<sup>28</sup> The fact is that as *Ooni-elect*, 'Derin could no longer afford to be radical or to pursue parochial interests. Thus even though he doubted the sincerity of the *Aare* in supporting his candidature, he played soft towards the Ibadan and impressed it on the *Aare's* delegates to him that he would not work against Ibadan's interest, *moreso* as an Ife contingent was in the Ibadan camp. This same attitude affected his handling of the issue of the position of Ife in the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War. The Ife wanted to change side immediately, but 'Derin was inclined to steer clear of the hostilities and as a result attempted to place some restriction on traffic in military supplies through the Ife territory in the belief that this would curtail the belligerent parties.

The Modakeke issue which is often emphasised as the major factor which conditioned 'Derin's actions during the period was not, for him the real issue at stake. In fact, in the spirit of Ife belonging to all Yoruba, successive *Oonis* before 'Derin and the older chiefs, at all times, have recognised the rights of all refugees from any part of Yorubaland to residency within the kingdom. The real issue on which they have always remained insistent is that wherever such people settled, must be regarded as Ife towns and the inhabitants as subjects of the *Ooni*. 'Derin said it all when he told the peace commissioners in 1886 that "The Modakeke are our relatives, we want them to amalgamate with us and no more live as a separate people."<sup>29</sup> Toki, an indigene of Ibadan in Modakeke also rightly impressed it on the 1886 peace commissioners that the Ife's grudge was not against Modakeke but the Ibadan.<sup>30</sup>

The real issue, at the base of Ife agitations throughout the 19th century was a territorial problem. For this, the Ife again blamed the Ibadan. Although Ife was never a large kingdom, by c. 1850 when it was brought within the Ibadan Empire, it had extended in the east to the relatively weak Ondo kingdom, crossing its traditional boundary, the Oni river, to the Oluwa. Towards the Ijesa country in the north, Ife chiefs

appear to have exercised some authority in the neighbourhood of Osu which, although recognised as part of the Owa's territory with an Ijesa *Oloja*, was a buffer zone between Ife and Ilesha. In actual fact, the Ife never coveted all these 19th century acquisitions. For instance, throughout the period, they made it abundantly clear that they would vacate Oke-Igbo which they recognised as a non-Ife settlement and a traditional fief of the *Lisa*, the most high-ranking *Iwarefa* chief in Ondo. Even though Ife soldiers were on Ondo soil, most of their farm holdings were on the Ife side. To their kith and kin in Ijesa territory such as Ifewara, they appealed to come back home if maltreated by the Ijesa. While not taking other people's land, the Ife have always insisted that theirs should not be taken either. But Ibadan had appropriated over three-quarters of Ife territory and had taken direct control of all her major settlements placing their *Ajele* not only in the outlying settlements but even at Modakeke. It is against this violation of the territorial sovereignty of their kingdom that the Ife protested throughout the 19th century. As the Modakeke chiefs told the peace commissioners in 1886 "Twice the *Aare* sent a number of slaves to beg 'Derin to come and reign and the reply the *Aare* received was that he should cede to him all the towns from Ipetumodu to Apomu and within eight days the war would be over."<sup>31</sup> Given the might of Ibadan in the second half of the 19th century, the Ife could not articulate this grievance; rather it is on the Modakeke they vented their spleen. This was because the Ife regarded the Modakeke as kith and kin of the Ibadan. Ibadan was a state which had sub-ethnic compositions similar to that of Modakeke. Indeed the Modakeke themselves regarded their settlement as an outpost of Ibadan. In any case, Ibadan was so formidable that it could neither be forced to vacate the towns it occupied nor challenged directly by the Ife. In the circumstance, the *Ooni*-elect advocated caution and refused to declare an overt attack on Modakeke as demanded by his more radical compatriots.

The issues became more complicated for the *Ooni*-elect when in March 1881, the Ibadan decided to attack Osu. This alarmed the Ife who refused Ibadan troops passage through their territory, alerted the Ekitiparapo of the plan and began preparations for an attack on Modakeke to divert Ibadan's attention. 'Derin appeared not to have agreed to this move and stoutly refused that Modakeke should be attacked. He pointed out that a confrontation with Modakeke would inevitably draw Ife into a clash with Ibadan. This, the *Ooni*-elect could not risk. He could not mobilize enough force to confront a combined Ibadan/Modakeke force or even the Modakeke alone. Most of the troops at his disposal were deployed to protect the trade routes crossing Ife territory. He could not count on the Ekitiparapo who were themselves encamped at Kiriji and who in any case did not look upon the Ife as trustworthy allies.

Thus until 1882 when Ife openly declared for the Ekitiparapo, 'Derin submitted to the Ibadan authority but engaged in intrigues against them. Meanwhile he adopted a pacific attitude and engaged in the duty of finding peace to the on-going hostility. As he pointed out to all visitors to Oke-Igbo, between 1881 and 1886, as *Ooni*-elect, he was naturally called upon to take an interest in a wide variety of issues and problems affecting the whole of Yorubaland. Additionally, the restoration of peace was of paramount importance to him. Apart from various overtures he made to stem the tide of hostilities, six bold attempts were made by him between his selection as *Ooni* and January 1882<sup>32</sup> to bring an end to the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War. The first in August almost succeeded in getting the combatants dispersed but for the mutual distrust among them



and the lack of trust in the sincerity of the *Ooni*-elect himself. The second in October of the same year saw 'Derin appealing to the Rev. Daniel Olubi, the CMS missionary at Ibadan for assistance. This attempt also failed as a result of Rev. Olubi's failure to give the required support. Also, if Samuel Johnson's disposition is anything to go by and if it represented the feeling in C.M.S. official circle, the attempt failed because the missionaries were not willing to cooperate with 'Derin. Thenceforth, the *Ooni*-elect made persistent efforts to seek assistance of the British government. He suggested steps to be taken which were lauded as good and acceptable both among the literate Yoruba elements involved in the search for peace and in official circles in Lagos.<sup>33</sup> For instance, he offered that his messengers and those of the Lt. Governor should proceed to the battle front, assemble the belligerents for a conference and ensure the dispersal of the troops.<sup>34</sup>

In explaining 'Derin's attitude in the critical months between March 1881 and January 1882, Samuel Johnson accused him of vanity and arrogance based on an exaggerated notion of his pre-eminence in Yoruba politics.<sup>35</sup> Johnson's argument is based on the fact that 'Derin had his power concentrated in Oke-Igbo. But as indicated earlier, 'Derin's hold on the settlement was a precarious one. The initial basis of his success at Oke-Igbo was his considerable military power viz-a-viz the Ondo. This power he demonstrated frequently between 1850 and 1878 by sending out armed bands to attack recalcitrant settlements and to protect trade caravans from which he extracted some tolls. By the 1860s, he had succeeded in diverting the trade route passing to the Ekiti country to pass through Oke-Igbo, even though that route was longer than the one through Ode-Ondo.<sup>36</sup> 'Derin's influence on traffic along the route has been exaggerated. Of the five or so routes identified by Akintoye as forming the 'Ondo Route' network, only one passed through the Ife territory, while all passed through Ondo country. Even the use of the Oke-Igbo route was always made difficult as a result of continual hostilities between the Ife and the Ondo. On the other hand, the four other routes passing directly from Ode-Ondo to the Ekiti country were relatively safe from 1872 when the Ondo were restored to their capital and particularly from 1875 when the CMS opened missionary stations in the Ondo territory.<sup>37</sup> 'Derin was certainly not in control of the Ondo section for the Ondo authority had given strict instructions that no Ife or Oyo man should be allowed free passage. Not even the messengers of the Lagos government were spared the ordeal of rigorous interrogation by the Ondo. On one occasion a group led by Mr. Hastrup, informed their interceptors that they had some business with the *Ooni*-elect. To this they received the curt reply that "Derin is nobody in Ondoland."<sup>38</sup> In fact, in the last quarter of 1881 when 'Derin was being wooed, the Ondo road was made virtually impassable as a result of a war between the Mahin and the Epe. 'Derin appeared to be aware of the fact that his supposed control of the Ondo road was a farce and began to give serious thoughts to finding alternative routes through Ife territory.<sup>39</sup> Obviously, the Ekitiparapo had no problem using the Ondo road; on the other hand, 'Derin could not guarantee the safety of Ibadan traders using it.<sup>40</sup>

Why then did both the Ibadan and the Ekitiparapo continue to make appeals to 'Derin at Oke-Igbo? Why did the Ibadan in particular not appeal to the Ondo authorities? Why was it that even external arbiters such as Karara, the head of the Ilorin forces encamped at Ofa and agents of the British government continued to make passionate appeals to 'Derin.<sup>41</sup> The answers to these questions seem to lie in the peculiar position of Ilc-Ife

as the cradle of the Yoruba; and in the belief that the *Ooni* occupied an exalted position, at least as a *primus inter pares*, in intra-Yoruba relations.<sup>42</sup> This is why all the belligerents, including the *Alaafin* and the revolutionaries at Ibadan, continued to look up to 'Derin as the only person in the Yoruba country capable of bringing about a cessation of hostilities.

There is hardly any doubt that 'Derin attempted to capitalise on these sentiments. Even though not yet consecrated *Ooni*, he saw himself in the wider context of Yoruba politics from c. 1880. Thus he frowned at any other Yoruba *oba* making direct contact with the Lagos administration without informing him. When all *Obas* had lost hope of an internal settlement and appealed to the British administration in Lagos to interfere and make peace, 'Derin remained optimistic that he would bring the belligerents to the conference table and only asked the governor to join him in the search for peace.<sup>43</sup>

But in actual fact, what dictated 'Derin's attitude from c. 1880 was not the vanity of being *Ooni*-elect.<sup>44</sup> His actions were guided primarily by the intention to solve the political problems facing the Ife. For instance, he wanted a way of humiliating Ibadan and settling the issue of the territorial appropriation on his own terms. One of the ways by which he wanted to do this was to generate anti-Ibadan feelings among all other Yoruba sub-groups and portray them as the aggressors who had thrown the Yoruba country into chaos by making it impossible for him to return home and be consecrated *Ooni*.

Thus it could be argued that 'Derin was not fully committed to making peace, at least not a peace that would leave Ibadan strong. His strategy appear to be to dilly-dally until Ibadan power was broken and she was forced to surrender. As Samuel Johnson observed, his neutrality was short-lived and he soon switched his sympathy to the confederates and was perpetually suspicious of the Ibadan.<sup>45</sup> In spite of his seemingly reconciliatory attitude to Ibadan, the *Aare* and his chiefs never trusted him neither did the Ekitiparapo, for up till 1882 the Ife contingent was still in Ibadan camp and 'Derin appeared to be the stumbling block in a formal declaration for the Ekitiparapo by the Ife. Furthermore, the utterances and actions of the *Ooni*-elect did not help matters. Thus, he received presents from both sides without any qualms and in the process whipped up anti-Ife sentiment not only in the belligerents' camps but also among the neighbouring Ondo and Ilaje peoples. Charles Nelson and Samuel D. Kester gave a summative account of contemporary impressions about 'Derin:

'Derin is known by his speech and action to us to be a knife that cut on both sides, for he receives slave presents from both parties who are at war with each other, and promised them continually the restoration of peace which he found himself unable to do, but still receiving presents on pretence of his being able to do so; and it is to be further observed that he is more for the Ekitis than the Ibadans.<sup>46</sup>

While 'Derin's ambivalence did slow down the peace process, it did not entirely explain the reason why fighting continued till 1886. The underlying factor is that 'Derin's moves did not carry the respect and force of authority that they were traditionally expected to command. As explained above, the basis of his intervention was the aura attached to the office of the *Ooni*. But by the 1880s the old social norms had broken down completely and there were only a few men around to uphold the old order.<sup>47</sup> In any case, 'Derin was not yet consecrated *Ooni* and therefore the belligerents were under no compulsion to accept his mediation even if they were willing to do so.

The issue was far more complex than 'Derin could handle. As Akintoye noted, the situation "required a greater power which enjoyed the respect of all and had the military strength to back up its prestige and to generate confidence about the terms of any settlement and the peace of the future to quench all the open and subterranean fires raging in Yorubaland."<sup>48</sup> In fact, 'Derin had a clear enough perception of the issue to realise this; and he explained to the Ibadan that the issue was one "between all powers" and that he could not handle it solely without involving all the relevant parties."<sup>49</sup>

The years between 1882 and 1886 saw 'Derin devoting greater part of his attention to the resuscitation of trade within the Ife territory. It was this that forced him to adopt a pacific attitude on the Modakeke issue; for continued hostilities in the Ife region could disrupt trade. However, his trading policy remained inimical to the interest of Ibadan. Thus his 'closure' of the Ondo route to "prohibitive articles" such as gunpowder was more anti-Ibadan. The Ekitiparapo could transport their wares and avoid Ife territory, passing through Mahin to Ode-Ondo and Iperindo to Ilesa. On this route, they would encounter no hostility since they would only pass through Ondo territory whose authority was benevolently neutral to them. On the other hand, the Ibadan could not totally avoid Ife territory since they had to pass through the strongly garrisoned settlement of Isoya to Modakeke. Thus even though the *Ooni*-elect claimed to have allowed both the Ibadan and the Ekiti to use the Ondo/Oke-Igbo route, the latter had an advantage over the former even within Ife territory where the Ekitiparapo had the sympathy of a cross-section of the people with the connivance of 'Derin.

Obviously by the end of 1881, 'Derin had made up his mind to commit Ife to the Ekitiparapo cause. He constantly complained against the domineering power of Ibadan. Even when Ibadan authorities were asking him to play a reconciliatory rather than partisan role in the conflict, he was suspicious of their intentions.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the fact that the Ekitiparapo alliance was one of monarchists rising against the republican stand of Ibadan seemed to impress him that it was wiser to join forces with the Ekiti. Thus he frequently admonished the *Aare's* envoys that the *Aare* should first settle his problem with his king (the *Alaafin* of Oyo) before approaching him for assistance. But in the circumstance, fear of a possible reprisal from Ibadan kept him from declaring for the Ekitiparapo. He believed, perhaps not without some justification, that Ibadan would interpret such a stand as a rebellion and seize the opportunity to avenge the death of Ayikiti.

Aware of the duplicity of the *Ooni*-elect, the Ibadan issued threats of reprisal against Ife. These exacerbated the matter as the Ife radicals felt compelled to take active anti-Ibadan measures. They constantly attacked Ibadan traders using Ife territory and discouraged the sale of ammunition and various necessities such as salt to the Ibadan. Ife-Modakeke relations degenerated rapidly till in c.1882 when an Ibadan delegation sent to repair the relations mishandled the issue and instigated a revolt which led to an attack on Ife.<sup>51</sup> This led to the decampment of the Ife troops in the Ibadan camp at Igbaajo to the Ekitiparapo camp at Imesi-Ile.

The physical involvement of Ife troops in the Kiriji War ended shortly after the decampment, for the outbreak of Ife-Modakeke War necessitated the Ife troops being sent home. In earnest, however, Ife was turned into another front of the war. A detachment of Ekitiparapo troops and one from Ijebu led by *Seriki* Ogunsigun encamped permanently in Ife territory to assist the Ife against the Ibadan-Modakeke



alliance. The immediate effect of this on the main front was the weakening of Ibadan force at Kiriji. To assist Modakeke, a detachment of Ibadan troops was sent from Igbajo. This led to an intensification of attacks by the Ekitiparapo and the loss of many of the good and reliable Ibadan fighters. But more significant was the Ife's efforts to close the Ondo road permanently to Ibadan traders; a move which starved the Ibadan of all essential commodities including salt and ammunition.

The four years between 1882 and the signing of the Peace Treaty in 1886 was a period filled with attempts to consolidate, in practical terms, 'Derin's position both as *Ooni* and as a middleman in the booming trade of the interior. There were three major political issues which he had to come into grips with particularly in the context of local politics. These were, the Modakeke issues, the issue of the land taken over by the Ibadan and that of the rehabilitation of the Ife in exile. In his handling of all these issues, 'Derin appeared to have antagonised a small but very influential section of the community, the radical elements. Signs of a conflict between the *Ooni*-elect and the chiefs surfaced when in February 1882, they insisted that 'Derin should send the Ijebu troops away.<sup>32</sup> In fact, between March 1882 and September 1886, there were many stories of plots against the *Ooni*, and it would appear that the people were kept from revolt only because there was no immediate substitute commanding such fear and respect as 'Derin.<sup>33</sup>

The *Ooni*-elect might not have wished to antagonise his compatriots but his trading interests made him to adopt an attitude far above the parochial interests of the radical elements. As trade in the Ondo sector expanded, the hostilities could not but have negative effects. For instance, the Ondo continually harassed Ife traders and appeared to have diverted much of the trade to the Ekiti country to the more easterly routes through Ode-Ondo and far away from Ife territory. This led to a desire of all trade-minded person, including the *Ooni*, to crave for peace, particularly with regard to the free passage of traders and articles. In fact, from 1882, the *Ooni*-elect became more resolute in bringing the belligerents to the conference table. The sack of Ile-Ife in that year and subsequent armed skirmishes between the Ife and the Modakeke/Ibadan had caused so much confusion that trade through Oke-Igbo had been completely paralysed. It was 'Derin's desire therefore that Ife should adopt a pacific and reconciliatory attitude towards both the Modakeke and the Ibadan. On the other hand, the Ife chiefs and war leaders did not feel safe with the Modakeke at their backyard, moreso when Ibadan remained strong. They were so jittery that even efforts by Christian missionaries to help mend fences between Ife and Modakeke were rejected.<sup>34</sup> This fear of the Modakeke presence was so strong that it frustrated all attempts at reconciliation between the *Ooni*-elect and his chiefs.

Nevertheless, it appeared that the *Ooni*-elect's efforts would bear some fruit as both the Modakeke and the Ife appeared to develop some cooperation, and were eager that the war should be brought to an end. As Samuel Johnson reported, in April 1886, 'the road between Modakeke and Ife camp was thrown open, and not only the messengers of both parties met, but also parents, children and friends and relatives long separated rushed into each other's arms, the Ife flocked to Modakeke, some spending three to five days there, and the Ife women and children who were captured at the fall of Ile-Ife were allowed to go and see their kindred at the Ife camp.'<sup>35</sup> The Modakeke in particular were eager to mend the broken fences between them and the Ife and made frantic efforts to

see the town rehabilitated.<sup>56</sup> In fact, in the period, what the Ife appeared to have articulated to the agents of the Lagos Government was the issue of the territory appropriated by Ibadan.<sup>57</sup> Even though from their demeanour, it is clear that the Ife still harboured some grievances against the Modakeke,<sup>58</sup> the overall atmosphere was 'quiet and friendly with peaceful intercourse going on between the two groups.'

But the lack of coordination that characterised Ife policies during these years was reflected in the peace treaty signed in 1886. The Ife chiefs prevailed on the peace commissioners to include in the treaty a clause that would ensure the removal of Modakeke from their backyard. Even though, this was against the personal interest of 'Derin, who believed that the issue of the land appropriated by Ibadan was more important, he could do no more than delay the signing of the treaty for a few days after the chiefs had appended their marks. He could not unilaterally take any far reaching decision without the commitment and support of the Ife chiefs. The dilemma he was in was further complicated by the fact that since he was not yet *Ooni*, he was, in reality not yet the ruler of Ife and the decision of the chiefs was more binding than his own.

This conflict, between the *Ooni*-elect on the one hand and the Ife chiefs was complicated by the refusal of the Modakeke to evacuate their settlement even after the Ibadan troops had been withdrawn from Modakeke. Thus, the Ife problem remained unsolved with the effect that while the camp at Igbajo/Imesi-Ile broke up, that at Ife remained and the bulk of the Ife continued to live in exile. Efforts made by all parties to resolve the impasse at Ife failed. It was believed that if the Ife in exile could be brought back home, tension would cease particularly as the Ife chiefs had disowned Ogunsiḡun, the leader of the powerful Ijebu contingent. For instance, the Ibadan after the withdrawal of their troops from the Modakeke camp enlisted the assistance of Ogedengbe, Fabunmi and Owa to bring the Ife back home, promising to "put matters straight." On an occasion, the *Alaafin* of Oyo himself took the initiative. He sent an *Ilari* to Modakeke with instructions that they must do everything possible to see the Ife back home. Even the Modakeke were eager to get the Ife back home and sent series of unheeded appeals to Oke-Igbo that 'Derin should return to Ife to be crowned.

In view of 'Derin's persistent lament a few years earlier that it was "the unsettled state of the country" that prevented him from performing his investiture ceremonies,<sup>59</sup> it is strange, that with the cessation of hostilities and with entreaties from all over the Yoruba country 'Derin should be reluctant to lead the Ife back home from exile.

An ostensible reason is that the task of rebuilding the city was an enormous one. Higgins, reporting in 1886 observed that "so completely had the town been razed to the ground that it was scarcely possible to discover the traces of a single house in the bush and grass which had overgrown the place."<sup>60</sup> In comparison, the towns where the people were in exile had become fairly large settlements and thriving market centres bustling with a host of economic activities. For instance, Oke-Igbo, where 'Derin had his power concentrated was "a large town with streets full of people." Higgins further reported:

The road by which we had travelled during the day lay through farms and I was surprised to see the extent of land under cultivation. It is a curious fact that while the Oke-Igbo people go in so extensively for farming, the Ode-Ondo people do very little in that way, and are almost entirely dependent on Oke-Igbo for their supplies of corn, yams etc.<sup>61</sup>

But the real issue in Ife politics after 1886 which prevailed on 'Derin was the conflict which had developed between the *Ooni*-elect at Oke-Igbo and the radical elements resident in Isoya. These radicals were disappointed that 'Derin did not toe the hardline of his younger days, particularly on the Modakeke issue. After 1886, they embarked on series of intimidations to frustrate the peace treaty. They were "a most stubborn and unruly lot to deal with and keep in check" and on many occasions had to be threatened with summary execution by Fabunmi.<sup>12</sup> In view of this recalcitrant attitude, it is not wide off the mark to infer that 'Derin refused to be crowned at all because of the fear of insecurity in the hands of the radical chiefs; knowing fully well that neither his "friends in Lagos" nor Fabunmi could rescue him from them once he began his investiture ceremonies.

## Notes and References

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26. Oral interviews: E.T. Ladipo (aged c. 80) Ilare quarters, Ile-Ife, November 1982. Ayikiti suddenly went blind and died shortly after.
27. "Statement of the Modakeke chiefs," *op.cit.*
28. Oral interviews: Chief Ali Awoyera (the *Lowa Ijaruwa* of Ife) explaining the reason why 'Derin was not crowned insisted that "he could not have been installed since he refused to drive the Modakeke away."
29. "Statement of 'Derin" *op. cit.*
30. "Statement of Modakeke chiefs," *op. cit.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. See for instance the statement of Ogedengbe in CO. 147/48.
33. CO.147/49 "Haastrup to Rowe, "7th April 1882; also Griffith to Lt. Gov. 17th March, 1882.
34. CO. 147/47 "Johnson to Lt. Gov. 29th Nov. 1881."
35. Johnson, S, *The History*, *op. cit.*, pp. 464 – 647.
36. On this route see Akintoye, S.A., "The Ondo Road Eastward of Lagos, c.1870–95" J.A.A., X, 4, 1969, pp. 581–98. Akintoye, S.A, *Revolution and Power Politics*, *op. cit.* pp. 583–585.
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43. CO.147/49 Encl. 1, Desp. 71 "S. Johnson to Gov., 1st April, 1882." also,

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44. cfs. Akintoye A., *Revolution and Power Politics op. cit.* pp. 162–164; Johnson, S *The History* pp. 464–465.
  45. CO.147/49, Johnson S to Gov. Gen. 1st & 4th April 1882.
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  47. Adediran A., "The 19th Century Wars and Yoruba Royalty" ch. 29.
  48. Akintoye, S.A., *Revolution and Power Politics op. cit.* p. 171.
  49. Co. 147/48 Encl. Johnson, S to Lt. Gov." 23rd January 1882.
  50. NAI, CMS(Y) 1/7/5 Johnson to Griffith 23rd Jan. 1882.
  51. CMS G3 A2/02, Johnson to Griffith, 26th Nov. 1881; CMS G3 A2/03, 'Phillips Journal extracts for half year ending June, 1882.'
  52. Report of Nelson and Kester *op. cit.*
  53. Oral interviews: Ife chiefs, 1974.
  54. Adediran A., "Religion and Politics in Yorubaland: A Case study of Ile-Ife, C.1850–1930" *Islam and the Modern Age*, (forthcoming).
  55. Johnson, S., *The History op. cit.* p. 536.
  56. Report of Charles Phillips, 22nd Dec. 1886 in *Accounts and Papers op. cit.*
  57. "Moloney to Messengers of the Ekitiparapo, May 1886" in *Accounts and Papers op. cit.*
  58. See Johnson, S., *The History op. cit.* pp. 523–525.
  59. See for instance, CO.147/49 Griffith to Rowe, 19th March, 1882.
  60. Report of Henry Higgins *op. cit.*
  61. *Ibid.*
  62. *Ibid.*

**SECTION B**

**The Generals and their War Tactics**



## Chapter Fourteen

# Obadoke Latoosa: The *Aare-Onakakanfo* during the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War

### M.A. Are-Latoosa

The Yoruba traditional system of government was and still is among the most highly structured in Africa.<sup>1</sup> Today, it is not possible for the head of a state or government to combine his civil duties with that of the commandant of the army. But in Yorubaland in pre-colonial times, valiant individuals combined civil with military functions. One of such individuals was Latoosa who rose to become the head of the Ibadan Empire and the *Aare-Onakakanfo* of Yorubaland. Obadoke Latoosa migrated from Ilora<sup>2</sup> to Ibadan where he became, not just a local warlord, but also a hero of the whole Yoruba ethnic group.<sup>3</sup> His father was known as Ore-Onsa, and his own name Latoosa is believed to have been derived from the circumstances of his birth. The name suggests some hardship on the part of his parents.

Obadoke Latoosa knew very well that his town, Ilora was very close to the new capital of the famous Oyo Empire before he decided to go to Ibadan. The Ibadan then were fighting wars for the *Alaafin* of Oyo to protect the Oyo Empire. The allegiance of the people was to no other ruler than to the powerful *Alaafin* who headed the very extensive empire.

Latoosa was a traditionalist to the core. But in spite of his faith in local herbal medicine, he had no children until he was introduced to the Islamic faith. Subsequently he became a fervent muslim. Also, before his arrival in Ibadan, Latoosa was a specialist in the planting of palm trees. But on his arrival in Ibadan he gave up farming and joined *Basorun* Ogunmola's private army where he rose rapidly to become the captain of Ogunmola's guards. While still with Ogunmola, Latoosa's first involvement in real war was the popular Ijaye War during which he captained a detachment of Ibadan soldiers.<sup>4</sup> Later, Latoosa led contingents of Ibadan soldiers to Iseyin and Irawo in the struggle to undermine Kurumi's influence in the upper Ogun area. Latoosa also took part in the Ijebu-Ere War in the Ijesa country. Thus, he quickly made his own mark as a soldier. This enabled him to rise very high in rank before the death of Orowusi, the then *Baale* of Ibadan.

Before the death of Orowusi in August 1871, Ajobo, who was the then *Balogun* of Ibadan, next in rank to Orowusi, and Orowusi's possible successor, had been banished from the town. As a result of this, immediately Orowusi died, the mantle of leadership

fell on Latoosa who was then the *Otun Balogun* of Ibadan. On the 3rd of October, 1871, Latoosa was installed the *Aare-Onakakanfo* and *Baale* of Ibadan. Oluyedun Afonja, the son of the great Afonja of Ilorin was the first *Aare-Onakakanfo* of Ibadan. *Aare* Latoosa was the second *Aare-Onakakanfo* in Ibadan, though some people said that he usurped the title from the rightful owner, Ojo Aburumaku who at that time lived at Ogbomoso.<sup>6</sup> Barely a week after his installation as *Baale*, he named his Chiefs: Ajayi Jegede Ogboriefon became the *Balogun*; Alli Luluwoye was made the *Otun Balogun*; Ayorinde Aje bagged the chieftaincy title of *Osi Balogun*; Lawoyin was installed the *Seriki* while Akeredolu (son of *Baale* Orowusi) and Tajo were made *Otun Seriki* and *Otun Aare* respectively.

Meanwhile Ogedengbe, based in Ilesa had become a powerful figure not only at Ilesa but also throughout the eastern Yoruba country.<sup>7</sup> Ogedengbe's cordial relationship with Ibadan warriors made him receive part of his military training from them. In fact, it was Latoosa who saved Ogedengbe's life when he was accused of being a traitor by *Basorun* Ogunmola. Death was the penalty for the offence then, but because of the respect that Ogunmola had for Latoosa, Ogedengbe was set free, though not without a mark on his face.

There was a vacancy in the stool of *Owa-Obokun* of *Ijesa*-land and there were two contestants to the throne. They were Odigbadigba, who was Ogedengbe's candidate and Oweweniye, who was supported by a majority of the Ibadan chiefs. Oweweniye was crowned the new *Owa* at Ilesa instead of the local popular choice. This incident led to a popular war named the "Ogedengbe War". While the installation of Ibadan's candidate was going on in Ilesa, Ogedengbe's nominee was in detention at Ibadan. After the installation, Odigbadigba was released only to be tricked into execution. This enraged the *Ijesa* who, led by Ogedengbe deposed the Ibadan-imposed *Owa* and went on rampage. This event started the Ibadan-Ijesa War. Latoosa in response, sent his troops to Ilesa under the command of Ajayi Jegede Ogboriefon, the *Balogun*. The Ibadan troops went on an unprecedented rampage as the cream of the *Ijesa* army, including Ogedengbe himself, had fled the town before their arrival. Ostensibly in pursuit of Ogedengbe, the Ibadan army extended their conquest into the *Ekiti* country. But at Igbo-Alawun between Igbara-Odo and Ikere they encountered a serious resistance in which Ogedengbe was victorious while the Ibadan suffered a great loss. *Seriki* Lawoyin a leader of the Ibadan troops fell into the hands of Ogedengbe. The situation was saved that day with a re-inforcement brought by Ajayi Ogboriefon which helped the Ibadan to defeat Ogedengbe eventually.

The Ado War was another battle in which *Aare* Latoosa was a principal actor. In 1873, the *Ife* and *Modakeke* were at loggerheads, as they had always been since the 1850s.<sup>8</sup> The *Ife* people sent emissaries to *Aare* Latoosa for assistance against *Modakeke*. It was not proper for a *Baale* to go to war, but since Latoosa was an *Aare-Onakakanfo*, it was in order for him to participate. Before he and his detachment reached *Modakeke*, the *Ife* people had settled their rifts with their neighbour. The contingent felt that it was a disgrace to return home without fighting; more so as they would miss the spoils

expected in form of slaves and materials. They therefore raided Ekiti towns and villages under the pretext of avenging the death of one Abayomi, *Ajia Baale* of Ibadan during an earlier expedition at Agbado-Ekiti. Igede-Ekiti was their first port of call where prisoners of war were taken. The same fate befell Aisegba. The *Aare* led Ibadan forces into Ado, conquered Ado towns such as Igede, Iyin, Awo and sacked the main town, Ado. Thousands of people were captured in this encounter. But *Ewi Atewogboye* visited the *Aare* at his camp at Ifaki to negotiate the release of some of those captured.

Ogedengbe, having been driven out of his bases at Ilesa and Igbo-Alawun, continued to ravage the towns and villages in the Ekiti country. This often brought him in conflict with the Ibadan. For instance, a *Deji* of Akure, *Oba Ojijigugun* solicited and got the services of Ogedengbe to wage a war against the people of Ise. By then Ise had sent for Ibadan troops. Led by two war-chiefs, *Seriki* Iyapo and Ilori, the *Osi Balogun*, the Ibadan reached Ise to discover that Ogedengbe had ransacked the town and evacuated the inhabitants as prisoners of war to Akure. As it happened in the case of Ife and Modakeke, the Ibadan troops refused to return to Ibadan. Instead they decided to attack Emure, a town not far from Ise. This they did because of the suspicion that Emure people supplied food to Ogedengbe when he besieged Ise. Emure was captured within a day because most of the people had escaped to nearby towns and villages.

In November 1875, *Aare* Latoosa decided to wage another war against the Ekiti. He led the Ibadan army augmented by Ilorin mercenaries residing in Ibadan, and went to Ekiti land. They camped at Iyapa and used the town as a base from where the Ibadan army travelled from town to town. The Ekiti were unable to withstand the onslaught of Ibadan troops. However the Ibadan suffered occasional losses such as in an ambush in which several men lost their lives. As a result of this, the war expedition was called "*Wo Kuti*" meaning "The piling up of corpses". Nevertheless, the Ibadan conquered a greater part of Ekiti land and established civil authority by appointing *Ajele*, administrators to take charge.<sup>9</sup>

Latoosa did not limit his assaults to the Ekiti. There were several attempts to match his troops against the Egba though there was an Egba chief who was rather more interested in creating better understanding between the two groups (i.e. between Ibadan and Egba) than going to war. Ogundipe, the *Alatise* of the Egba, made many attempts to prevent an imminent hostility. It was not the plan of Latoosa to besiege Abeokuta, but rather, he wanted his men to raid Egba farms and destroy crops growing there. This was to force the Egba to run short of food and as a result of famine to compel them to eventually surrender to Ibadan. Latoosa continued the farm raids until his chiefs became dissatisfied. They wanted more. *Balogun* Ogboriefon advised that they be allowed to enter Abeokuta and prepare for a prolonged siege of the town until hunger would compel the Egba to give up, but the *Aare* did not accept the advice.

Latoosa rampaged all Egba farms, but at the war front, the chiefs refused to come out to fight the Egba. Only the *Aare's* private army put up a spirited fight. The others fled until *Seriki* Iyapo and his soldiers helped them to repulse the adversaries. His constant siege on Egba towns was to open up a direct route to the coast.



The chiefs planned to make him lose all battles. They knew that, traditionally, they must accompany the *Aare* to all wars and if need be die with him on the battle field. But as their private armies were not bound by this tradition, the chiefs decided not to take along their private soldiers to wars with the *Aare*. Thus when *Aare* Latoosa waged a war against Osiele near Abeokuta, his chiefs did not participate even though contingents were sent from Ila, Ife, Modakeke, Ilesha, Ekiti and some other towns under Ibadan. Nevertheless, the *Aare* was disastrously defeated as, during the war, the troops deserted him. But the *Aare* was resolved to take Osiele by all means. Thus after the initial defeat, he sent his senior war chiefs to clear the road to Porto–Novo, for his arms and ammunitions. The Egba heard of this and attacked the Ibadan at Ogatedo and Meko. But owing to determination and adequate reinforcements, the Egba were defeated, and they fled.

The Jalumi War was also fought under the leadership of *Aare* Latoosa. It was a war involving warriors from Ilorin, Ekitiparapo and Ibadan. Latoosa himself did not take part in the war but he sent his emissaries under the leadership of *Balogun* Ajayi Ogboriefon assisted by *Osi Balogun*, Ilori Ogunmola. Before the troops left Ibadan, Latoosa himself had caused disaffection among his lieutenants. This he did by placing his private army and the private army of the late *Seriki* Iyapo under the command of *Osi Balogun*, Ilori Ogunmola instead of under the rightful chief, *Balogun* Ajayi Ogboriefon. During the war, the Ibadan troops forced the Ilorin troops to fall into the flooded River Otin thereby giving the name "Jalumi War" to the war.

The defeat of Ekitiparapo troops at the Jalumi War did not dampen their spirit to free themselves from the domineering control of Ibadan. Ekitiparapo recruited more men to enable them engage Ibadan troops in another combat. They planned to attack Ikirun once more. *Aare* Latoosa made the mistake of sending *Seriki* Ajayi Osungbekun to lead a small force to assist the town instead of sending the whole of Ibadan troops to defend Ikirun.

The Ekitiparapo requested Ogedengbe to lead them against Ibadan. He declined initially, since he had vowed never to fight Ibadan. The mantle of the Ekitiparapo leadership then fell on Fabunmi of Imesi–Ile. Both the Egba and the Ijebu supported the Ekitiparapo. Ogedengbe also later led the Ekitiparapo troops after much persuasion. Initially, Latoosa did not go to the war front, instead he and his family went home. While his chiefs and troops were undergoing a lot of problems he was at home with his first son, Sanusi. The warriors sent a message asking him to send his children to them at the war front to share their experience. The *Aare* realised that by asking him to send his son, the chiefs were indirectly asking him to come. He therefore went to the Ibadan camp at Igbajo with the aspiration that he would end the war within the traditional seventeen days.

The chiefs fought fiercely to show the *Aare* that they were able-bodied and reliable. It was their intention to demonstrate to the *Aare* that they were valiant, even though they were no longer ready to win any war for *Aare* Latoosa. *Aare* Latoosa did not receive the co-operation of his war chiefs.

It is a matter of regret that very important Ibadan war chiefs died during the reign of Aare Latoosa. *Balogun* Ajayi Ogboriefon died after the Jalumi War in 1879; *Alli* *Laluwoye* (*Otun Balogun*), died in the Kiriji War in 1882; *Seriki* Lawoyin was deposed; *Osi Balogun* Ayorinde died in 1876; *Osi Balogun* Ilori (Ogunmola's son) died in the battle against the Ilorin at Ofa; *Seriki* Iyapo (*Balogun* Ibikunle's son) committed suicide in Ibadan after an insurbodination charge was levelled against him by Aare Latoosa; *Otun Seriki* Akeredolu died in Ibadan; and Ajejenku committed suicide. There were others who were either killed at the war front or died naturally.

Several wars were fought during the reign of Aare Latoosa and the death of many noble men was recorded. There were also several disturbances in Ibadan.

As a result of his dictatorial attitude, Aare Latoosa's chiefs and troops frustrated him during the Kiriji War, losing all battles deliberately to the annoyance of the Aare. This deliberate frustrating actions of the chiefs continued until Aare Latoosa died in the Ibadan camp in August, 1885. The area called Oke Are in Ibadan was named after him, and one of his descendants, Situ later became the *Baale* of Ibadan.<sup>10</sup>

Aare Latoosa was brave and courageous. He was a very powerful man, more of an Aare-Onakakanfo than a Baale. He loved war and war in return brought him abundant riches. Despite some of his failures he was a successful warrior. His 'achievement' as an administrator and Baale of Ibadan is however an issue to be debated. The strength of the Ibadan army was based on the relationship between Aare Latoosa, his war-chiefs and the troops. A cordial relationship was lacking and this weakened the army. Aare Latoosa's regime marked a dark period in the history of Ibadan and was almost as dark as the period in Yoruba history when the old Oyo Kingdom collapsed. The period was a gloomy one, characterised by wars, blood-shed, civil disturbances and general depression in Ibadan. Yet, out of this gloomy period, a new age of progress was born.

It is pertinent to say that the life of Latoosa was an eventful one. He was a hero in life and death. Whatever his omissions and commissions, he was a shining star among his own people and even beyond. He was not born rich, but through the dint of hard work he became wealthy; he was not born a soldier, yet he attained the highest rank in the force as the Aare-Onakakanfo. Latoosa was a motivator and leader of his own people whether at home as Baale of Ibadan, or at the war front as the Aare-Onakakanfo. His death marked the closing of a chapter in Yoruba history as regards warfare. The whole of Yoruba race would forever remember that great war lord who made history.

## Notes and References

1. See for instance Lloyd, P.C., 'The Traditional Political System among the Yoruba' and Biobaku, S.O., (ed.) *Sources of Yoruba History* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1973).
2. Now a town in Oyo Local Government Area of Oyo State
3. See for instance Johnson, S., *The History of the Yorubas*, (C.M.S. Lagos 1921)
4. An extant account by Prof. S.A. Akintoye states that he was the first surviving

child of his parents, hence the name Latoosa (Ola-to-sinu-isa, glory already buried) given to him at birth indicating that the parents did not care whether or not he survived since all of their past issues (their glory) had already been buried. Another states that his survival was regarded as miraculous enough to constitute him into a deity (Ola-to-Orisa).

5. For details see Ajayi, J.F and R.S. Smith. *Warfare in Yorubaland in the 19th Century*
6. Johnson S op. cit.
7. See Rev. B.F. Adeniji's ch.15 in this volume.
8. See A.A. Adediran's ch.13 in this volume.
9. See Awe Bolanle, 'The Ajele System...
10. Deposed in 1925 and banished to Saki where he died.



## Chapter Fifteen

# Ogedengbe: An Ijesha Warrior in the 19th Century

B.F. Adeniji

One important feature of Yoruba warfare in the 19th century was the emergence of a class of professional military leaders an example of which is Ogedengbe of Ilesa. Such men owed their positions to their soldierly qualities rather than to the accident of birth and their yearning ambition was a positive catalyst to the prolongation of the wars.<sup>1</sup> The fact must be borne in mind in any analysis of Ogedengbe that although in the human drama of his country, he made history, history first made him.

Orisarayibi Ogundamola, who later took on the appellation of Ogedegbe during his adolescence, was born in about 1822 to Apasan Borijiwa and Juola Orisatomi. From the family record of Ogedengbe<sup>2</sup> it is gathered that Ogundamola's birth coincided with the annual Ogun festival which shows that it was the later part of the year.

Aponlese I was the *Owa* of Ilesa when Ogedengbe was born. It was customary in the tradition of Ilesa for the reigning king during an Ogun festival to invite all Ijesa *Babalawo* to the palace to consult the Ifa oracle in a bid to predict what the new year had in store. On this particular occasion in 1822, the *Babalawo* invited informed the *Owa* that on 'Isegun day' – the high point of the Ogun festival, a woman would give birth to a boy, who would grow up and free the Ijesa people from foreign domination. At the time of this prediction, the Ijesa kingdom was not subjected to any foreign authority. This might either be an after – thought to justify Ogedengbe's later life roles, or one of those predictions that made no sense at the time it was made. All the same, *Owa* Aponlese I was said to have quickly caused his searchlight to reach all Ijesa towns and villages in a determination to fish out the new born baby. Ogedengbe was the only baby that was found to be born on the day. After the naming ceremony, Ogedengbe was carried from his father's house at Ijoka in Ilesa to Atorin, his mother's village 24 kilometres away from Ilesa township.

Tradition has it that Atorin, at the close of the 18th century consisted of only six to eight huts with an average population estimated at 40. The village's communication system with other parts of Ijesaland was poor. The only route to Ilesa being a footpath with undulating surface dissected by numerous running streams. Hence Atorin was almost cut off from the rest of Ijesaland. Because of the circumstances surrounding Ogedengbe's birth, his father was appointed a private adviser to the *Owa's* cabinet. On account of his special position Ogedengbe was given special treatment by his parents and his mother's relations at Atorin where he grew up. It is recalled that he was so much pampered and protected that he was still breast-feeding at the age of seven. It is

Ogedengbe moved to Ilesa camp. In collaboration with other members of his group namely Abiola Ogunmonakan, Asokunsoo Esisa (Omofe), Arimoro, Ogunmodede (Lejoke), Jabagun (Odo) and Ayibi-Owo, Ogedengbe entered the Ijesa camp when they were most needed to help with total mobilization.

The brilliant success of the Ijesa in these years of expansion were to be reversed by Ibadan. In 1867, an attack on Igbajo by Ilesa caused an Ibadan assault on Ilesa and the systematic imposition of Ibadan imperialism on the Ijesa country following the collapse of the Ijesa army and the flight of Ogedengbe to Ita-Ogbolu.<sup>8</sup> As is now well known, the Ibadan imposed the *Ajele* machinery of administration with the characteristic tyranny of imperial administration. After the Ibadan had occupied Ilesa for only ten years, Rev. Allen, a CMS Missionary who passed through Ilesa in February, 1878, described Ilesa in the following terms:

I was very sorry to see this large and beautiful town of Ilesa which was full of grass, dilapidated buildings and only with few people living in it.

Ekiti and Ijesa people groaned under the Ibadan domination and there were subterranean movements in each village as to how best to remove the Ibadan yoke on them. For example Ogedengbe had camped his soldiers at Odo very near Ilesa as early as 1867. In like manner, Aduloju and Falowo of Ado-Ekiti had groomed some soldiers at Ado.<sup>11</sup> However, the first open rebellion against Ibadan overlordship came from Imesi-Igbodo, (Okemesi) a town with sentimental attachments to Ilesa.<sup>12</sup> There, a young prince, Fabunmi, enraged at the indecent assault of the local *Ajele* on his wife instigated the execution of all Ibadan officials at Imesi-Igbodo starting off a chain reaction which led to the execution of many Ibadan officials in Ila, Ekiti and Igbomina towns.<sup>13</sup> The incident at Imesi-Igbodo rapidly developed into an anti-Ibadan liberation movement. Thus a confederation of Ijesa, Ekiti, Yagba, Efon, Igbomina and Akoko peoples calling themselves Ekitiparapo emerged. Many towns responded by sending contingents of soldiers under capable leaders. For example, Ogunminu led the Otun soldiers, Faboro led Ido troops, Fajembola led the Oye contingent, Bawo led the Akure troops while Arimoro and Obe led the Ijesa soldiers before Ogedengbe took over.

Before the Ekitiparapo War, Ogedengbe is believed to have had two major encounters with the Ibadan. The first was in 1864 when he was captured while assisting in the defence of Ilara against Ibadan troops. On that occasion, he was placed under Bada Aki-Iko, an Ibadan warrior. Within a short time, Ogedengbe learnt much about the tactics and logistics of warfare and escaped at the end of 1864. On the second occasion in 1867, he was again caught during the Igbajo War. Under another Ibadan war leader, Ogunmola, Ogedengbe was privileged to receive yet more training in warfare.<sup>14</sup> These two occasions exposed Ogedengbe to a lot of experience in war strategy. A leading Ijesa chief, called Okanle Ariyasunle (the Odole of Ilesa) was said to have leaked Ijesa secrets of warfare to Ibadan troops. To avenge the disaster, Ogedengbe led his war-boys against the chief, who later fled from Ilesa. Since then, Ogedengbe became the avowed hero of the Ijesa.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, from then Ibadan raided Ilesa ceaselessly. In order to put a stop to these predatory incursions, Ogedengbe opened Ilesa gate to the oppressors and proclaimed Ilesa, a vassal state on about 4 June, 1870.<sup>16</sup> After this proclamation, Ogedengbe gathered his followers and went to Odo,

their training ground in 1867. Ogedengbe was notorious for his incessant raids on Ibadan. The Ibadan, who were aware of this, made schemes to check him. For example in 1872, there was a succession dispute in Ilesa. The Ibadan *Ajele* quickly selected the weakest contestant to the throne. When Ogedengbe heard the news, he hurriedly came to Ilesa with his war-boys and drove the *Owa*-elect away. The Ibadan, under their newly elected general, *Balogun* Ogboriefon came to the rescue. Ogedengbe and his clique were driven away from Odo and were pursued as far as Ogotun.<sup>17</sup>

Ogedengbe left Ogotun in the heat of hostilities and settled at Ita-Ogbolu where he sought an alliance with the Akure people. Voluntarily, Aduloju and Falowo both from Ado-Ekiti with their war-boys joined Ogedengbe at Ita-Ogbolu.<sup>18</sup> With adequate manpower, Ogedengbe attacked Ibadan and defeated them at Igbo-Alawun in 1872.<sup>19</sup> Ogedengbe even sent some punitive expeditions in 1873 against some towns and villages including Ikere and Ise which did not co-operate with him in his bid to stamp out the Ibadan from Ekiti and Ijesa districts.<sup>20</sup> By 1873, the Ibadan had developed keen interest in Ekitiland and had even captured all major towns in the area. Mainly because of Ibadan's established influence in Ekitiland, Ogedengbe left the area for Akoko districts. Ogedengbe defeated a handful of Ibadan elements and established himself at Ido-Ani.<sup>21</sup> From Ido-Ani, Ogedengbe extended his influence to other towns in Akoko districts destroying all connections with Ibadan.<sup>22</sup> For instance, towns like Agbado, Iksre, Irun, Isan, Ogbagi and Pakunde easily surrendered to him. His intention in Akoko was not to rule but to reinforce his war efforts in preparation for a large-scale attack on Ibadan. He also meant to cause a stir in the rank and file of Ibadan army in order to dissipate their energy. Several people were captured as slaves, able-bodied men were recruited as soldiers while blacksmiths' workshops were converted to factories to produce war implements such as guns, swords, matchets, knives and bullets. Ogedengbe did not limit himself to this area of the war. He, at one time was said to have planned to invade Benin Kingdom, a venture that was never accomplished.

After the formation of the Ekitiparapo in 1879, there was the popular clamour among notable war leaders in the confederacy for Ogedengbe to lead them — a demand which was predicated on his wealth of experience and self-sacrifice. Many people were delegated to find Ogedengbe, but it was the seventh party led by Opiliki that actually saw Ogedengbe.<sup>23</sup> Ogedengbe felt unhappy to cancel and disengage from his planned trip to Benin but early in 1880, he reluctantly followed them back to Ilesa. At Imesi-Ile where the Ekitiparapo were camped, Ogedengbe was triumphantly ushered in with cheers and ovations. Prince Fabunmi, hitherto the leader of the group, voluntarily stepped down for Ogedengbe.

There were several descriptions about the real personality of Ogedengbe especially by the foreigners who visited the war camp. For instance, Commissioner Higgins said in 1887 that:

Ogedengbe in appearance and in manner, his successes and elevation never spoilt his inherent simplicity. Thus, when as the leader of the Ekitiparapo he needed to attend state occasions, he dressed very plainly in a white sack-shaped garment (*aso-oke*) reaching nearly to his knees and drawn in around the waist by a belt and he wore brown velvet 'skull-cap'.<sup>24</sup>

Ogedengbe was said to be highly self-opinionated and was quite aware of the high office of responsibility he held in the estimation of both friends and enemies. As a



Commander-in-Chief, Ogedengbe did not escape the criticisms and appraisals of his associates as well as foreigners. When Rev. Wood saw him in 1885, he said:

"Ogedengbe was the best businessman he had ever seen among the so-called uneducateds; so laconic and straight-forward."<sup>25</sup>

Apart from Ogedengbe's personal qualities, his great military reputation and the rise of his personal war-boys — (a contributory factor to the respect he enjoyed among his colleagues) he was probably older than any of his colleagues. For instance, Prince Fabunmi was estimated to be about 35 years in 1884 by Higgins and Smith and all other war leaders were his age-group.<sup>26</sup>

For smooth administrative strategy, Ogedengbe created two councils. First was the High Command in which most of the war leaders usually met for decision making, and secondly the General Assembly, where all the members of the group were officially informed about the progress of the war and their necessary contributions.<sup>27</sup> Several meetings of the General Assembly were held but the meetings of the High Command were more frequent as the Command dealt with the logistics and strategy of the wars.

On the relations between the war leaders and the traditional rulers, Ogedengbe created a *modus vivendi* whereby the war leaders and the traditional rulers agreed on all essentials. While the war leaders accepted the traditional rulers as "fathers" the traditional rulers on the other hand accepted the war leaders as their "courageous sons."<sup>28</sup>

Ogedengbe was not only a war leader, he was also a diplomat. In support of the Ekitiparapo Obas, Ogedengbe as the Commander-in-Chief sent messages of diplomatic relations to the palaces of prominent Yoruba Obas like Awujale of Ijebu-Ode, Alake of Abeokuta, Osemawe of Ondo and Aderin Ologbenla, the Ooni-elect of Ife resident at Oke-Igbo, seeking their tacit cooperation and economic support.

His role in the total freedom of the north-east Yoruba districts from Ibadan domination gave him a prestige that was never accorded any individual, not only in the whole of Ijesaland but throughout the north-east Yoruba districts. After the signing of the 1886 Treaty, Ogedengbe and his troops retreated to Imesi village, where they stayed until the end of the clash between Ibadan and Ilorin over Ofa town in 1893.<sup>29</sup>

At Ilesa, Ogedengbe and his war-boys found it very difficult to settle peacefully because of the nature of their previous profession. These war-boys were fond of causing public disturbances, ravaging farms, harassing peaceful citizens and even kidnapping innocent subjects.

In 1894, Captain R.L. Bower, the Resident of Ibadan and political officer in-charge of the hinterland of the Lagos Colony had to warn both Ogedengbe and Prince Fabunmi to stop their nefarious activities.<sup>30</sup> Soon afterwards, following reports of serious disturbances caused in Ogotun and Ilawe by Ogedengbe's war-boys, as well as the incessant press criticisms about Ogedengbe's atrocities, he and some of his war-boys were imprisoned at Iwo.<sup>31</sup>

In 1896 when Frederick Haastrup became the Owa of Ilesa he pleaded passionately for the release of Ogedengbe. Governor Carter hesitated to free Ogedengbe but after a lengthy consultation, Carter ordered Oba Haastrup to deposit £6,000.00 for his bail. The Owa paid this huge amount and Ogedengbe was released. The terms of bail were stiff because Carter wanted to make sure that Oba Haastrup kept vigil over the activities of Ogedengbe, which bordered on criminality.

Ogedengbe was conferred with a chieftaincy title of *Obanla* of Ilesa, in 1898, as the highest mark of his gallant performances in the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War. As an important chief and elder statesman he listened to the advice of the Ilesa masses, and advised the Owa accordingly.

Chief Ogedengbe died in 1910. The cycle of his saga was complete. Traditions even claimed that there was an occurrence of earth vibrations in the centre of the town three days before his death. The Ijesa people believed that it was a bad omen or an act of discord with Owajalorun — the creator<sup>32</sup>

Ogedengbe was undoubtedly an astute warrior. In the victory of the Ekitiparapo War, he was able to mobilise every resource which presented itself to the greatest advantage of every situation. He resisted the onslaughts of a great and an outstanding war-like empire with a small force at his disposal. One of the chief elements in the Ekitiparapo success was the personality and leadership of Ogedengbe. The self-confidence, courage against all odds, perseverance despite disaster, and stamina, which eventually enabled Ogedengbe and his forces to stand up to Ibadan forces show that it is to the confederates themselves and not to the superiority of their weapons that their success must be credited.

Despite his success and elevation, he did not allow his inherent simplicity to be exploited or abused. Perhaps his simplicity must have been the consequence of his humble upbringing. He showed great wisdom in dealing with his colleagues who had been leading the Ekitiparapo before his arrival at the war theatre. Though he was well over 60 in 1886, he was remarkably boyish in manner, articulate in reasoning and restless in his movements. This quality was often a great asset to him and endeared him to any who had to negotiate with him.

As the generalissimo of the Ekitiparapo army, he was undoubtedly the most outstanding figure. Also, he was the chief executive officer who enjoyed much power over decision-making. He was the sole representative of the confederacy in foreign affairs.

His authority over judicial matters was superb and most chiefs would willingly surrender to his arbitration in their quarrels with one another.

It would be falsification of history to say that all his military undertakings were successful. Both as an individual and as a war-leader, Ogedengbe suffered his own reverses and his failures. He saw the most profound changes in the art of war in which the traditional weapons were replaced by sophisticated and deadly weapons in the hands of specially trained and well disciplined Ekitiparapo sons from Lagos. All these changes were possible only through the mobilisation of all resources under his control.

Undoubtedly, Ogedengbe was a great man of military genius. He has been credited with foresight as well as zeal for the interest of his country. His diplomatic manoeuvres had commonly been claimed as most brilliant intellectual achievements because they always gained their immediate objectives and served to divide a world of enemies.

Ogedengbe was held by Rev. Johnson, to be a straight-forward man who always wished to be faithful to his promises. He had good intentions, though stubborn and resolute, and he had an unquestionable confidence in the use of force. The Ijesa people have continued to cherish his memory. They have erected a cenotaph in the front of Obokungbusi Town Hall in his honour. Some have even built schools and named them after him. For instance, Ogedengbe Memorial School in Ilesa is a monumental

masterpiece to his memory. For the majority of the people in Ijesaland he remained the greatest warrior. Hence the following praise-song to acclaim his achievements:

*Gbogunboro lo l'oke Anaye,  
Odidi omo afodidi gun;  
O fiwaju digun, o fehin digun,  
Odidi omo afodidi digun;  
Ayanmode baba ogbe odidi omo  
afodi digun.*

#### Literally meaning

It is the war lord who owns Anaye.  
The fortress that checks all wars  
with chest and back he faced the foes,  
the fortress that could check all wars,  
the great scar that dwarfs all sores,  
the fortress that could check all wars.

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## Chapter Sixteen

# The War Generals in Eastern Yorubaland

G.I.O. Olomola

### Introduction

The Yoruba call heroes, *akikanju*, interpreted as brave men and saviours of their people in times of trouble. In social and political circumstances, the *akikanju* is considered as vital to his society as the head is vital to the snake.<sup>1</sup> Apparently, the 19th century produced more heroes than any of the preceding centuries as a large part of Yorubaland was embroiled in one conflict or another.<sup>2</sup> Generally, Yoruba folklore is replete with narratives containing legendary accounts some of which probably crept into the folklore during the life times of these great men or were built up by their descendants. For instance, Aduloju was reportedly born with a complete set of teeth<sup>3</sup> and it is claimed that an early morning tremor occurred in Ilesa, the day Ogedengbe died.<sup>4</sup> Beyond such folktales rendered to indicate the greatness of such war veterans, there are other attempts to perpetuate the names of valiant individuals in various localities. Such is the case with Ogedengbe and Aduloju whose names have been popularly adopted in Akoko and with Faboro whose name became inseparably associated with his home town, Ido.<sup>5</sup>

The focus in this chapter is on the generals of the eastern half of Yorubaland who in many respects were heroes of their time. The names that generally recur both in oral and written literature are Esubiyi of Ayede, Samo, the *Sao* of Akure, Are, the *Balogun* of Oun Moba; Fajembola the *Olugbosun* of Egosi (now Ilupeju); Aso Ogundana of Ikole; Isola Fabunmi of Imesi Igbo Odo (now Okemesi); Adeyale of Ila; Faboro of Ido; Akata of Ijero; Agada of Efon; Oluborode (Olobode) Ajawon of Ikogosi; Ayimoro (Arimoro), Ogunmodede, Orisarayibi, Ogedengbe of Ilesa; Apoti of Ipetu-Ijesa and Ayikiti and Derin Ologbenla of Ife. This roll call is by no means exhaustive.

These heroes of eastern Yorubaland can be classified into six categories. A mere handful, notably Ogedengbe and Fabunmi are well-known and have become household names. Some are probably equally important but their input have not been clearly established; these include Fajembola, Faboro, Arimoro and Ogunmodede. The third group consists of notable war chiefs who led their contingents into the confederate army of the Ekitiparapo. But they had very brief active service. Among these are Prince Adeyale (of Ila) who lost his life in the battle at Iba about November, 1879 and *Balogun* Are (of Oun) and Oluborode (of Aramoko) who fell in battle about May, 1880. They did not serve long enough with the result that not much can be said of their input. The fourth category consists of warriors mentioned only because they were commanders of local contingents, nothing in particular is known about their service and valour

although local narratives often include them among the heroes. This group includes Bakare of Afa(Akoko), Afongbangba of Isan, Pepeye of Osi, Aruwaji of Ilesa, Baba Efon Osunke of Umo (Ilesa), Agunsoye of Ijebu-Ere (now Ijebu-Ijesa), Olutu of Igbira-Ikole (now Ayedun) and Arikun of Obo.

It is worth mentioning that some *Oba* played conspicuous roles in the conduct of the war and peace. Those who readily come to mind are four of the prominent *Obas* of Ekitiparapo communities namely, Agunloye, the Owa of Ilesa, Adifagbade, the Oore of Otun Moba, Oyiwaye of Ekiti, the *Ajero* of Ijero, and Eyeowa, the *Olojudo* of Ido. The group should include Aderin, the *Ooni*-elect of Ife who lived at Oke-Igbo and initially played the role of peace broker. The five *Oba* were directly hurt by Ibadan domination. The Ijesa authorities met burdensome imperial demands including tribute twice a year and contribution of men and materials to war efforts of Ibadan. *Oba* Agunloye lamented the ravages perpetuated in his domain which he claimed lasted the entire reigns of *Owa* Aponlese, Alobe, Legodo and Oweweniye and was grieved that Ibadan authorities obtained as gratification, 25 bags of cowries, 20 baskets of indigenous kolanut (*cola acuminata*) and a slave before he was allowed to ascend the throne.<sup>6</sup> *Oba* Adifagbade of Oore felt the guilt as it was he who called for Ibadan assistance in the 1840s to relieve Otun of Ilorin pressure.<sup>7</sup> Because of his grief and personal stake, the Oore took pains to host the assembly of Ijesa, Ekiti, Ila, etc., warriors and watched the administration of the oath that accompanied the decision to terminate Ibadan domination by force of arms.

Indeed, at a stage in the war that broke out, the four Ekitiparapo *Obas* moved to Imesi-Ipole near the war camp<sup>8</sup> to boost the morale of the soldiers and make themselves available for necessary advice.

Another category of warriors of Ekitiparapo communities did not directly participate in the activities of the confederate army and have therefore lost a lot of attention. These individuals include the *Lijof* of Aramoko, Esubiyi of Ayede and Aduloju of Ado.

A pattern clearly ran through the background and career of most of the veteran warriors discussed here. They were products of the 19th century circumstances. Many of them were products of Ibadan military tradition; these built up personal armies and made themselves formidable in their immediate countryside, acquired some reputation or became the *Balogun* of their respective kingdom or local community. The Kiriji/Ekitiparapo Wars constituted their field of glory. In the circumstances, the narratives contain identical episodes, involvement in the same campaigns and battles as well as similar fate at the hands of the British political-cum-military officers in 1894. A few of the generals shared the same or identical praise names and praise poems. For instance, Ogedengbe and Aduloju were acquaintances in Ibadan; and as will be shown presently, Aduloju came to Ogedengbe's assistance in his struggle against Ibadan in December, 1872. Both warriors led their armies against Ise in 1874 and thereafter jointly campaigned in Owo, Ose and Akoko areas up to 1879. They shared identical praise names thus:

Ogedengbe: *O le Yagba g'oke Iwori*  
*O le 'ra Udoahi g'ori uia*  
*Oko Ekiti oko Akoko*



Aduloju: *Oni Akoko nbimo sin l'ese oke<sup>9</sup>*  
*O ko 'le etu, ko 'le ibon*  
*O gba in etu si baale lorun*  
*Oko Ekiti oko Akoko*  
*Oni Akoko nbimo sin l'ese oke.<sup>10</sup>*

### Some Biographical Sketches:

Isola Fabunmi, one of the principal protagonists of the liberation of Ekitiparapo states and people from Ibadan domination, was a prince of Imesi-Igbo-Odo. He lived between 1830 and 1903. He began life as a tailor, learning the trade from his father, Prince Adesoye.<sup>11</sup> In his early years, Fabunmi was exposed to war situations: his father was an itinerant soldier and as a boy, he was old enough to realise the impact of war when the Ijesa sacked Imesi-Igbodo in the 1860s. From his father, he inherited the iron will and bravery which made him the acceptable leader of the youths in Imesi-Igbodo. He was also to inherit, at his father's death, most of his father's great household which included enormous wealth in slaves, clothes and cowries. But in spite of these, he embarked on an itinerary which took him to the major military states of the time such as Ilorin and Ibadan where he acquired military training. For instance, at Ibadan Fabunmi attached himself to the household of Akintola and took part as a war boy in many Ibadan campaigns in the early 1860s.

On his return to Imesi-Igbodo, Fabunmi was exposed to the privileges of militarism enough to be repulsed by the series of atrocities perpetrated by the various Ibadan *Ajele* in eastern Yorubaland. Ostensibly with the intention of challenging the imperial excesses in mind, Fabunmi began to re-organise the youths and introduced them to military tactics. At the same time, he began to build up a personal army in the fashion of the Ibadan warlords. He was, however, not to come into limelight until about May, 1878/9 when he killed the Ibadan *Ajele* at Imesi-Igbodo<sup>12</sup> and thus set in motion a series of activities that culminated in the outbreak of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War.

Fabunmi anticipated the wrath of the Ibadan and called for the support of all neighbouring communities. Eventually, an estimated 140 communities in Ijesaland, Igbomina and Ekiti sent delegates consisting of civil and military chiefs to a gathering before the *Oore* of Oun in July.<sup>13</sup> There, a decision was taken to pool human resources, build up a confederate army, resist punitive strikes and terminate Ibadan rule. The troops collected at Imesi-Ile and elected Fabunmi as *Balogun*. While efforts continued to be made to bring other notable warriors, namely Ogedengbe and Aduloju into the scheme, Fabunmi led the conglomerate hosts against Ibadan in October 1878/9.

In the early months of the war, Fabunmi had quick victories capturing Igbajo and subduing the Ibadan fortress at Ikirun before the celebrated Jalumi War of November 1878. When Ogedengbe was eventually persuaded to join the Ekitiparapo army, Fabunmi who was much younger and who did not match Ogedengbe's renown as a strategist and fighter relinquished the mantle of leadership to Ogedengbe. He later moved, in 1882, to the Ife camp to relieve Ile-Ife from Ibadan-Modakeke pressure and thenceforth protect it.

Despite Fabunmi's role in leading the Ekitiparapo revolt against Ibadan imperial rule, his enthusiasm in consenting to an armistice is worthy of mention and his activities during the signing of the treaty won him the enduring admiration of the peace

commission. He was a signatory to the peace treaty of September, 1886 and final treaties of March, 1893. His idea that Ekitiparapo communities gathered in one place a homeland, a city, for purpose of protection in post-war was not popular among his comrades. Nevertheless he returned home perhaps briefly in 1887 to effect a purpose; overthrow the government and seize the throne for himself. The putsch probably occurred in November or December because Johnson reported rather tersely in a letter, written in Oyo and dated 28 December 1887 that Fabunmi 'was driven out (of) Mesin (sic) town by the son of the Oloja Oke.<sup>14</sup> It is perhaps the only attempt he made on the throne. However he was expelled from the town and reportedly settled in a nearby cottage. Perhaps, he lived in this cottage with his war boys and was arrested there on the orders of the British Resident, Captain R.L. Bower, based in Ibadan. The Resident had reportedly compiled a list of prominent war chiefs of Yorubaland and embarked upon a campaign of intimidation and blackmail against them with a view to crushing them by destroying their threat to the effective establishment of British control and enhancing the prestige of the government.<sup>15</sup> Fabunmi was thus branded, arrested, taken to Odo Otin garrison near Ikirun, closely interrogated<sup>16</sup> and then released with order to disband his war-boys.

Fabunmi returned from Odo-Otin and lived for a few more years in his cottage where Imesi-Ipole (now Imesi-Ile) authorities sought and made him their *Oba* about 1902, a year before his death in 1903.

As indicated earlier, the Ekitiparapo War created many valiant heroes who should rank among the great ones but who were overshadowed by their more celebrated comrades. For instance among the Ijesa, there are records of gallant soldiers and commanders who performed creditably during the 19th century wars even though they have been overshadowed by Ogedengbe.<sup>17</sup>

Arimoro was a veteran Ijesa warrior, who took part in the Ilesha-Igbajo Wars, from 1866 to 1870, led his soldiers to reinforce the Ipaye and other forces at the Igbo Alaun campaigns up to early 1873. He was the accredited leader of Ijesa armies at the beginning of the Ekitiparapo Wars<sup>18</sup> and in the battles between November 1879 and February, 1880, when Ogedengbe arrived. From 1882 to the end of the conflict he led Ijesa contingent in the Ekitiparapo army which, under Fabunmi, was sent to protect Ile-Ife. He added a final feather to his crest early in June, 1894 when Ogedengbe was being arrested. Old and sick, Arimoro managed to resist Captain Bower and his men.<sup>19</sup> The veteran died in Ilesha about 1899.

Ogunmodede carved a name for himself as a brave warrior during the Ilesha-Igbajo Wars. He took part in the first battle at Igbajo, Ikirun and Inisa. As a part of the alliance package between the Ekitiparapo and Ilorin, each party in the alliance deployed a contingent in the other's camp as a guarantee of sincerity. Ogunmodede was commander of the Ekitiparapo contingent of some 25 men in the Ilorin camp,<sup>20</sup> a mark of the trust the leaders had in him. And after the wars, the Owa conferred the chieftaincy title of *Lejoka* on this gallant warrior.<sup>21</sup>

In the same class was Fajembola a foundation commander of the confederate armies and a member of the Ekitiparapo War Council. Fajembola was born in Egosi<sup>22</sup> (now an integral part of Ilupeju) in Ekiti State. His ancestors were believed to have migrated into the Ekiti country from the Igbomina area. A fairly tall and light complexioned man, Fajembola had a rascally adolescence which marked him out as a valiant individual

among his age-group. This is buttressed with an indomitable charisma and the knowledge of herbal medicine which he inherited from his father: He acquired an enormous personal wealth from his various hunting and warring activities and from the opportunity derived from his leadership of his age-group. This pre-eminence in local reckonings often put him into conflict with the Ibadan imperial administrative set-up in the Oyo kingdom, of which Egosi was a constituent unit. Thus on the eve of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War, Fajembola harboured a number of personal grievances against the Ibadan. Consequently, when the news of Fabunmi's action against the *Ajele* at Imesi-Igbodo reached Egosi, Mabinuori, the local *Ajele* was executed with the connivance of Fajembola. This was to make Oye's participation in the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War inevitable. But when the confederate army was being assembled, it was not Fajembola but the *Elejoka* (military commander) that was chosen to lead the Oye contingent. However, following the reverses suffered by the Ekitiparapo at Jalumi in 1878, Fajembola became the popular choice to lead the contingent.

Fajembola contributed immeasurably to the restoration of the Ekitiparapo confidence and it was partly due to him that the Ekitiparapo did not break up in 1878. It was Fajembola who led the delegation which eventually persuaded Ogedengbe to join the confederates. At various stages of the war, Fajembola proved his worth and valour. He had a peculiar tactics of 'surprise attack' which worked in many auspicious times earning him the cognomen '*o di an mo koro baja*' (meaning 'catch them unawares').

Overall, Fajembola could be described as a man of valour, a military genius, fearless, brave and a charismatic soldier. At the end of the war, he returned to Ilupeju and was given the *Olugbosin* chieftaincy title and became a member of the council of king makers. He lived on his military reputation and easily became the most influential individual in the neighbourhood till his death in 1907.

Many war veterans never rose beyond local popularity. This is not because of being less valiant than the well-known generals but largely because most of their activities were confined to their localities and they never had the opportunity of participating in the major wars of the time such as the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War. For instance the *Lijofi* of Aramoko in the 1850s and Esubiyi of Ayede were popular heroes in their respective localities, each remembered for heroic activities which led to the preservation of their communities.<sup>23</sup>

However, one of the most famous warriors of eastern Yorubaland, Aduloju, carved a name for himself in his campaigns in Ekiti and Akoko. He is reported to rank himself with Karara (Kara) the Hausa *Balogun* of Ilorin, Chief Ogundipe, the *Balogun* of Ikija and the *Alatise* of Egba and *Oloogun*, the reputable blacksmith of Owo.<sup>24</sup> Aduloju was the greatest and last *Balogun* of Old Ado kingdom. He succeeded Ogunbulu Ala, a native of Aisegba, in 1873, and died in 1905.<sup>25</sup>

Aduloju earned his appellation on account of his dark complexion, his actual name being Fasawo. Son of Chief Edemo of Odo Ado, he began life as a peasant farmer and leather-worker, a trade which he allegedly learnt at Ibadan where he also appeared to have been exposed to military tradition. For, as soon as he returned towards the end of the 1860s, he built up a personal army and soon became well-known in the district. He often times offered his services to *Balogun* Ala and also came to the assistance of his comrade, Ogedengbe, in December, 1872; rescuing the Ipaye from an Ibadan contingent.

It is said that Ibadan authorities recognised Aduloju's worth and soon after *Aare* Latoosa lured him (as well as Ogedengbe) into the Ogboni fraternity.<sup>26</sup> Aduloju came



under the spell of the cult and thereafter avoided rather than confront Ibadan authorities. Although not wanting in patriotism, yet, Aduloju remained so unbending in his loyalty to his oath that he and his men stayed away while Ibadan armies personally led by *Aare* Latoosa invaded Ado in January 1873. He also declined to participate in the Ekitiparapo War.

It is therefore no mean task presenting Aduloju as a hero, a reputable commander and strategist. He shot into prominence at the Igbo Alaun campaigns, and as *Balogun* of Ado soon after the Ibadan invasion, he led Ado forces against Ise in 1874.<sup>27</sup> With the assistance of Ogedengbe's Ipaye, he took the town by assault in 1875. During the next four years, the two pooled their resources and campaigned in Owo, Ose and southern Akoko, and as far as Aduloju was concerned he and his men were the victors of Idoani.<sup>28</sup>

After Ogedengbe's withdrawal and return to Ita Ogbolu on his way to Imesi Ipole, Aduloju carried his campaigns into the Akoko heartland from Oghagi to Afa. The conquest of Afa established him as a strategist and fighter whose output would have been an asset at Kiriji. Afa was then the largest Akoko community and the thinking among Ekitiparapo leaders was that if Aduloju suffered reverses there he would be forced to join the confederate army. So, they dispatched a powerful contingent from Imesi-Ipole to assist Afa defenders. But Aduloju conquered the town,<sup>29</sup> captured the Ekitiparapo soldiers and sent them back to the confederate camp.

Monsignor Oguntuyi gave three tenable reasons why Aduloju did not join the Ekitiparapo War. First, he credited Aduloju with powers of precognition by saying that he argued against his involvement in Ekitiparapo campaigns because he knew that neither side would win the war. Second, Oguntuyi claimed that the spell of the Ogboni cult weighed heavily upon Aduloju and third that he was fast approaching old age. In addition, Ado and Ikere were in a state of undeclared war and Aduloju feared that the worst might happen if Ado soldiers were to go to Imesi-Ipole.

After the campaigns in Akoko and Iyagbaland, Aduloju established a base at Imesi Lasigidi, a border town of Ado around 1881. There, he lived in the grand style of the military Aristocrats of the second half of the 19th century<sup>30</sup> with his war-boys sustaining him by their plunder. He was consequently branded like his contemporaries, arrested by government soldiers from Odo Oun and taken before the garrison commander, Captain Hawtayne who reprimanded but released him.

Aduloju settled in his lineage compound at Idemo quarters, in Ado-Ekiti where he lived the last years of his life. Ado authorities which derived great pride, human and material benefits from his campaigns in Akoko and Idoani recognised his worth and persistently urged him to take the vacant *Edemo* chieftaincy of his lineage. The veteran repeatedly declined but the title was conferred on him post-humously.<sup>31</sup>

## Conclusion

Looked at from any angle, most of the veteran warriors of Ekiti and Ijesa discussed in this paper will appear in any list of valiant soldiers of eastern Yoruba. Each of them was an *Akikanju* and subject of popular tale, oftentimes of adulation in his area or elsewhere. Ogedengbe who is easily the most renowned of the generals in eastern Yorubaland is an object of near worship in Idoani where, according to Oguntuyi, his cap which the local stalwarts captured in battle, is retained as a prize.

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## Chapter Seventeen

# War Ethics among the Yoruba

Akinsola Akiwowo

"Have Civilisations a life history? And in what sense have they a life history?"<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

There are compelling evidences of a phenomenal growth of militarism in most nations of the world today. State terrorism competes with fighting for freedom in relentless and uncompromising armed conflict. And what is more, the two world super powers and their allies possess the nuclear capability of blowing up the planet earth. Fred J. Cook, wrote in these terms about the moral and strategic dilemmas posed to mankind by the atomic age:

Both the moral and strategic dilemmas of the coming atomic age had been foreseen by the more perceptive men, and they were argued to their pre-ordained wrong turnings. If the World War I had undermined the fibre of Western man and led to the depravity of Hitler, World War II had marked the virtual death of Western morality. The fascist dictators began it, and democracy, giving only lip service to the principles of Christianity, had aped the ways of dictators. Hitler had ordered the mass bombing extermination of Rotterdam; the Allies replied, as soon as they had the power, with the indiscriminate bombing of German cities. War, a barbarity that for generations had been waged under strict rules of conduct for the protection of homes and the civilisation of a nation, now lost the justification of this purpose, for mass slaughter became one of its primary objectives.<sup>2</sup>

Summing up his long list of modern European war's atrocities, Cook concludes:

"This was war, World War II style. Armies no longer fought armies alone, they sought the death and destruction of an entire population. Yet we had not become in the early stages at least, so callous as not to recognise that this changed concept did pose a moral issue."<sup>3</sup>

Viewed against the weighty moral issues posed by wars in an atomic age, the question of what ethical issues were involved in the fratricidal wars in 19th century Yorubaland pales in significance. Yet the comments of Philip Carl Van Doren in support of the Marshall plan for the reconstruction of Europe after the Second World War makes it important that we examine some of the constituent elements of war ethics among African peoples of which the Yoruba are a significant group. Carl Van Doren said that there could be no peace in a world of life and growth and that the battles the fathers thought finished would be fought anew by their children if they wanted to preserve their freedom and liberty. For our purpose, the significant point in Van Doren's

ideological statement is that it is highly probable for a battle or war thought finished by the significant participants in that war or battle, to continue in the hearts of their descendants as long as their historical accounts persisted or were recalled under unfavourable circumstances.

### **The Position of War and Bravery in Social Life**

In the anthology of *Ifa* verses by Reverend D. Olarinwa Epega the following principles of warfare and bravery were stated, in the *ese-Ifa* named "Okanran-Eguntan:"

1. *Eni owo nya li Ogun i gbe*
2. *Lojo Eniyan ti ko le ja*
3. *Ti ko le soro*
4. *Ko ni i le gbenu aye pe*
5. *Ija n'sola*
6. *Ija nse iyi*
7. *A di fa fun Ogungbemi*
8. *A ni bi ko ba tile ni iri 'ran*
9. *Nigbakugba ti ija ba se si i*
10. *Ki o ma ma sa o*
11. *Alagbara li o ni aye*
12. *Kosi eni ti o je bu'yi fun ole*
13. *Akin lo ni aye*
14. *Won ki i bu ola fun ojo*
15. *A ni ki o rubo*
16. *Ki iye inu ma ra*
17. *Ati pe ki o le ni ara lile*

Free translation:

1. It is the person who is quick to act that is favoured by the god of war
2. On the day when men who can neither fight
3. Nor speak
4. Will not remain alive for long
5. War confers honour
6. War bestows prestige
7. Thus *Ifa* advised *Ogungbemi*
8. That even if he can not see
9. When fighting descends upon him
10. He should not desert the scene of fighting
11. For it is the strong who possess the world
12. No one bestows prestige on the weak
13. It is the brave who possess the Earth
14. People do not honour a coward
15. He was advised to offer a sacrifice
16. So that he will not be absent-minded
17. So also that he will possess strength.

Another *ese-Ifa* called "Okanran-Sa" however provides condition for bravery:

1. *Maja*
2. *Masaa*
3. *Li a imo Akin*
4. *Akin ti o mo i ja*
5. *Ti ko mo i sa*

6. *A ba Akin ibomiran lo*
7. *A da a fun Akinsuyi*
8. *Won ni ki o rubo*
9. *Ki o ba le mo igbati a iyera fun ija*
10. *Ki o ba le ma niyi lojo gbogbo*

**Free Translation:**

1. In fighting
2. And in not withdrawing
3. Is when we know the Brave
4. But the Brave who understands fighting only
5. And has not learnt the art of withdrawing
6. Would succumb to the Brave of the other side
7. Thus it was told to Akinsuyi
8. Who was told to offer sacrifice
9. So that he may know when to avoid combat
10. So that he may possess prestige on all days.

Brief on surviving a war is also found in the *ese-Ifa* called "Ose-Sa"

1. *Ija niwaju*
2. *Ija lehin*
3. *Bi ko ba pa a ni*
4. *A ma so ni di Akin-a fija -gbuyi*
5. *A da fun Abahun Ijapa*
6. *A ni ki o wa rubo*
7. *Ki o ma ba ku nipa ija*
8. *O gbo, o ru*
9. *Won ni: Ija ko ni i pa a laelae*
10. *Amokaye li a imo japa (Ija-o-pa)*

**Translation**

1. Fighting in the forefront
2. Fighting in the rear
3. If one does not die in such a situation
4. Then one may be a hero one who receives respect from fighting
5. Thus, it was counselled for Abahun Ijapa
6. Who was told to sacrifice
7. So that he may not die from fighting
8. He listened and sacrificed
9. They said to him "No form of fighting will ever destroy him".
10. World-renowned is he who survives fighting

### **Selected Yoruba Code of Ethics**

These *Ifa* verses from Ose-Sa, Okanran-Sa, Okanran-Eguntan indicate the following moral principles in the conduct of war among the Yoruba. *Ogun*, the god of war, looks with favour at those who are quick to take the initiative in a battle. War confers honour. War bestows respect and it is the brave ones who win both honour and respect at the end of the day. But who is the brave one? Certainly, it is not the foolhardy. It is the one who knows when to launch an offensive and when to avoid direct confrontation. He is also the warrior who is alert and always physically fit. Above all, he must be prepared to offer sacrifices to the gods as directed by *Orunmila*, the deity of wisdom and learning.



However, according to Awolalu, ritual sacrifice before going to war must create cooperation among the deities although *Ogun* is recognised as the god of war<sup>4</sup>.

### Examples from Battles in Yorubaland:

There are accounts by eye-witness missionaries, British army officers, as well as by scholars of Yoruba war history on the conduct of war during various campaigns. Mrs. Kemi Morgan's account of the heroic stand of the Owu warriors during the seven years siege on their town by the combined forces of Ijebu, Ife, Egba-Agura, and Oyo refugees, is an instance. The brave stand of Maye, the first military governor of Ibadan, is another. When Maye understood what the refusal of the war chiefs to see him in captivity meant, he made this desperate appeal to his captors:

*Omode Oyo*  
*E ma da a se o*  
*E m'oju mi kan agba?*

Thou Oyo youngsters  
 Do not attempt my death on your own  
 Bring me face to face with your elders

Likewise Kemi Morgan recalled many warriors of proven valour who were responsible for making Ibadan famous. There were deeds of valour recorded for men and women of Ekitiland. There were deeds of valour on both sides of the Osogbo campaign against the Fulani-Hausa troops of Ilorin. After this campaign, captured Hausa field commanders were released by Ibadan war chiefs, while the Yoruba military leaders who allied with the Fulani were executed as traitors. Such is an example of the ethics of war among the Yoruba. Normally in the conduct of war the field general who is captured must be treated with respect and dignity.

### Women of Valour in War:

Although the Yoruba had no regular army of women like the Amazons fighting for the Fon Kingdom of Dahomey, yet there were occasions when in times of national crisis, individual women of valour emerged to assume the leadership of the armed men in the conduct of war. A single example will suffice. It is recounted how Madam Omosa of Ibadan, the daughter of *Basorun* Ogunmola saved Ibadan from an Ijebu invasion. About this remarkable woman, Kemi Morgan wrote:

The story of *Basorun* Ogunmola will not be complete without a brief account of the remarkable woman called Omosa, *Basorun* Ogunmola's daughter. She could be described as the "Madam Tinubu" of Ibadan. She had great personality and influence in the town and was also wealthy. It is said that during the Kiriji War, she used to organise caravans and provide them with escorts to carry food and ammunition to the Ibadan troops fighting there. When the Ijebu traders began to sell the Sneider rifles to the Ibadan in order to enable them to continue the Kiriji War, Madam Omosa was one of the first people in Ibadan to buy rifles which she sent to her nephew, Kongi, fighting at Kiriji.<sup>5</sup>

What is of immediate relevance to our analysis of historical facts for the purpose of identifying some of the significant principles in the ethics of war among the Yoruba is the following account that demonstrates that it is not considered morally wrong for a

capable woman to take the initiative to prevent possible war calamity nor is it regarded militarily improper for regular fighting men to accept a woman's leadership that circumstances have thrust upon them. The account goes as this:

On one occasion, when most of the Ibadan war-chiefs were fighting in Ekiti country, the Ijebus took advantage of the absence of the war chiefs to launch an attack on Ibadan. The Ijebu invaders had already reached Ibuko market near Molete when Madam Omosa heard the news of the Ijebu invasion. So she quickly took off her female dress and put on one of her father's battle dresses. Then she called the male members of her household together, gave them guns and ammunition and called to them to fight the Ijebu invaders already at Ibuko market. She rode on her horse at the head of her army and like a war-chief, she carried many guns and wore an apron decorated with knives. She also carried clubs, and a sword. Her followers, who were also armed followed her to meet the Ijebu invaders at Ibuko.<sup>9</sup>

Although Madam Omosa and her followers successfully repulsed the invaders on two occasions, and successfully kept them at bay for three months, it was said that the invaders withdrew from attacking Ibadan after an Ijebu spy, seeing her having her bath, raised an alarm that they had been fighting a female warrior and a powerful witch. So the Ijebu invaders withdrew from the battle before they were bewitched by this strange woman warrior-chief.<sup>10</sup> From this account, Madam Omosa clearly demonstrated the truth of the principles contained in the *ese-Ifa*.

*Eni owo ya li Ogun i gbe*  
*Lojo Eniyan ti ko le ja*  
*Ti ko le soro*  
*Ko ni le gbe'nu aye*  
*Ija n'sola'*  
*Ija nseyi*

#### † Translation

It is the person who is quick to act  
 That is favoured by the god of war  
 On the day when men who can neither fight  
 Nor speak  
 Will not remain for long alive  
 War confers honour  
 War bestows respect.

### Ogun Abele and other Forms of War

If we are to fully understand the ethics of war among the Yoruba, we need to examine and understand the microcosmic and macrocosmic scales of war in Yoruba social thought. According to a Yoruba view, there is a domestic war, called *Ogun abele* and, another, *Ijaigboro*, or the war of the open spaces. The warriors in the domestic war are members of the same family who are divided into warring factions. The *Ogun abele* as the name suggests, is prosecuted domestically and it is fought with greater venom and relentlessness than is encountered in the *Ijaigboro*. *Ogun abele* is intense because of the face-to-face nature of the relationships of the primary group members who are 'the warriors'. *Ijaigboro* is diffused emotionally and "the warriors" may be one neighbourhood ward members, against another similar group. There are of course other wars; *Ogun-*

*ilu* which is war that embraces all, towns' people, *Ogun-orile ede* or war which involves one linguistic group against another, and *Ogun agbaye* or world war.

In our judgement, the internecine wars of Yorubaland of the 19th century were types of *Ogun-abele* for they involved blood relations, or ethnic groups, both near and distant. The tactics and strategies that were used in prosecuting the violent conflicts, the offensive and defensive attacks they employed in fighting the war, suggest that they stemmed from a basically agreed constitution. In an 1861 report by one Captain Arthur Trefusis Jones, from the Second West India Regiment, Sierra Leone, who witnessed the Ijaiye War as an observer, the declaration of war, mode of recruitment into war and the provision of war food rations, are also determined by the unwritten constitution. These may also be considered quite ethical. For example it is not considered unethical for each warrior to own his weapons, and for "each fighting man from Chief down wards... (to feed)... himself according to his own taste and fancies and means."<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, it was not considered unethical to seek allies from among former enemies in a new war against a former ally; or to permit the agents of an alien religion to seek allies from among former enemies in a new war against a former ally; or to permit the agents of an alien religion to provide munition, money, and moral forms of support to both sides of a war. Neither was it considered unethical, "if a man, having served some time at the war finds his supplies getting low, he quietly shoulders his firelock and returns to his home, until by work or otherwise, he acquires money enough to purchase a fresh supply of provisions, or a new harvest has replenished his barns."<sup>12</sup>

### Other ethical dimension

The late renowned oral historian from Iwo, David Agboola Adeniji wrote extensively on rites, rituals and oaths employed by the Yorubas to ensure the keeping of certain moral obligations on the part of the soldier and on the part of the community awaiting returning soldiers.<sup>13</sup> Two such moral obligations will suffice as examples. Adeniji describes one "*Etutu ti a ni lati se fun awon ti a o ba gba si ise omo ogun*", that is, the "Compulsory rituals for the newly drafted soldier". He says that the newly recruited soldiers were assembled into groups under different flags of war that served as the insignias of various war captains, and the subtotal of each group was intimated to the *Oba* who must provide each captain, for distribution, the number of kolanuts equivalent to the number of soldiers under each captain's command. In addition the *Oba* and the titled men and women must offer a great ritual feast, consisting of *ewa yikan*, *epo*, *igbin* and *emu* (roasted beans, palm oil, snail and palm wine) to the men. Nothing with blood must be slaughtered as offering to *Ogun*, the god of war, when the forces were marching to the war front. Kolanut was the fifth object in the ritual feast. Two priestesses of *Ogun* called *Aota* and *Afoda* respectively, are positioned at the shrine of *Ogun* located at the exit end of the town, to offer to each man lobed kolanut before he made his exit. The receiving soldier split the kolanut into four pieces and carefully kept them in the palm of his left hand. On getting to the *Ogun* shrine the soldier must cast the four lobes to the ground in front of the figurine of *Ogun* with these words of prayer:

*Ogun Alakaye*  
*Ayunlo Ayunbo o*

With this supplicatory prayer, the soldier sought the protection and preservation by *Ogun* in the battle fields. *Afoda*, the priestess who was the messenger of *Ogun* then



responded: *A se waa, Olumakin*, which may be translated as "So be it, Brave one!"

### Returning from the War Front

There were many taboos and rituals connected with the waging of war which the Yoruba observed. An important one as also described by Adeniji is that a soldier returning from the war front must not be allowed to enter the bounds of the town before an *ebo* (sacrifice) was brought to him at the entrance end of the town. This, says Adeniji, was to prevent the evil spirit, or unseen forces which were believed to follow a returning soldier from the battle field, from entering the community. If this exorcising sacrifice was not offered on behalf of the returning soldier, he was most likely to start a communal strife after he might have settled down at home. All the soldiers returning to a community were therefore made to congregate at the border of the town with their faces turned towards the town and all of them must offer their own sacrifices at the shrine of *Ogun* and *Esu*. An *Egungun* carries the objects of their sacrifices through the rank and file of the returning soldier to a place outside the town wall. Immediately after, the veterans march in a single file to the palace, to greet the *Oba*, "*Ekule!*" No one must look back during the procession.

The *Oba* in turn comes out into the courtyard to salute the veterans of war and to commiserate with them over their fallen comrades. Then he sacrifices a dog on their behalf. The *Oba* pours water and palm oil over the blood of the decapitated dog. After this he addresses all assembled, and wish them peace upon reaching home. Each soldier following his captain proceeds to his home. Such a day is noted in the community as day of laughter (*ojo erin*) and a day of tears (*ojo ekun*).

The following day, every veteran brings to the *Oba* the goods or property captured in the war. Since in keeping with Yoruba Constitution, it was the *Oba* who authorized the war he therefore has prior claims to the loots.

### Peace

Thus far, we have considered some elements in the ethical milieu embodying Yoruba warfare. We have not considered all elements in the sets of values and attitudes in this milieu. Even those considered may rightly be regarded as simply technical formalities from the perspective of the traditional military profession.

Raymond Aron, one of Europe's foremost sociologists, in his essay on war concluded his reflection on the possibility of an increase in the world perils with the diffusion of atomic weapon, in these words.

Should one try to penetrate the secrets of the future beyond the present phase of two coalitions armed with all the instruments of destruction which science can offer to human folly? What would be the point, unless to ward off the temptation to despair? Science not only makes wars insane because the havoc caused would be out of all proportion with any conceivable issue at stake; it also eliminates most of the economic causes of wars and brings countries together willy-nilly.

He also adds:

The men and nations sharing the benefits of modern industrial civilisation are divided chiefly by ideological prejudices and human

passions. The power of false ideas condemns all hope on world unity in the immediate future; but now the hope of a gradual, ultimate reconciliation of human race<sup>14</sup>

By contrast, among the Yoruba of the 19th century and other West Africans as well, ideologies seemed to have played little or no part in bringing about the wars. Even their religions, as Robert Smith observes, were not interested in proselytisation beyond ethnic boundaries.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, there were occasions when effective uses were made by an *Oba* to put an end to armed conflicts between two warring factions in his kingdom, using the invocation of the name and memory of *Sango*. That this did not, probably, feature in the 1886 Kiriji/Ekitiparapo Treaty is surprising. Rather, it was Christianity and Christian code of ethics which featured in this important Treaty.

That descendants of the combatants have succeeded in keeping peace for a period of 100 years suggests the existence of a *Pax Yoruba* whose values and attitudes are yet to be investigated, recognised, and made known to a wider public.

### Conclusion

It is indeed providential 1996, the year that commemorates the centenary of the 1886 Kiriji/Ekitiparapo Peace Treaty, is also the year the United Nations has declared as a Year of Peace, and the same year in which "The Bahai" Movement has chosen to carry to the world, a message of peace from its headquarters: *The Universal House of Justice*. In that message, the Bahai leader made these statements, among others:

The Great Peace towards which people of goodwill throughout the centuries have inclined their hearts, of which seers and poets for countless generations have expressed their vision, and for which from age to age the sacred scripture of mankind have constantly held the promise is now at long last within the reach of the nations.<sup>16</sup>

Again Professor Akinjogbin in his "Historical Notes on Yorubaland in the 19th Century" emphasised that the centenary conference was being organized "to remind ourselves of the advantages of the 100 years of peace bequeathed to us by our grand fathers and that we were to reflect on it and to continue to maintain and strengthen it."<sup>17</sup> In response to the call to maintain and strengthen the bequeathed peace we should, seek to know, understand, and apply what we refer to here as the *Ogbon itun-aye-se* with which our grand parents used to sustain the peace, and which they have passed on to us. Our peace research must be based upon a deep discriminating search for models of peace generation contained in the several orally recorded collective wisdoms of our forebears: the fundamental principles of which were taught by African sages, seers, and poets in the historic past. Developing this view, it has been argued that:

This collective wisdom is what we have named *Ogbon Itunayese* which literally means, the wisdom that is applied to the repairing of the world. *Ogbon*, however, may be translated into English as science, art, or time-tested knowledge derived from (the) collected experiences of mankind. There are many types of *ogbon*, among which are the peace-keeping *ogbon*. The term *itun-aye-se* can be rendered into English as the process of the re-moulding, rebuilding, remaking, or restructuring of the world.<sup>18</sup>

From our examination of an *ese-Ifa* known as *Irosuwori*, the following were the most notable elements in the *ogbon-itunayese* code of ethics in peace maintenance and

strengthening:

- (a) inner-will (*agbara-inu*) or determination;
- (b) peace attaining or creating patterns of behaviour in inter-personal, inter-group or international relations,
- (c) acquiring knowledge of the dehumanising effects of evil deeds;
- (d) as well as the awareness of the dire consequences of evil deeds to fellow men;
- (e) unforced acts of altruistic sacrifice; and
- (f) the seizing of every opportunity to contribute to good causes or to the multiplication of goodness wherever one finds it.

In the light of these six notable elements of *Ogbon itunayese* ethics of peace, the national conference on the theme of War and Peace in Yorubaland can be identified as a contribution to a good cause or a way of seizing a unique opportunity to multiply the goodness of the advantages of bequeathed peace.

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## Chapter Eighteen

# Implements and Tactics of War Among the Yoruba

O. Olutoye and J.A. Olapade

### Introduction

War has been described as the opposite of peace. Technically, it is "a state of open hostility between nations".<sup>1</sup> In this paper, we are extending the meaning to include hostility between a part and the rest of a nation. There are other terms such as campaign, battle, raid, skirmish, siege, and ambush, in the military vocabulary. These terms are not synonymous with war, rather they are the incidents comprised within a war. A war may begin and end with just one battle; that single battle is only a part of the total state of hostility. War, whether declared or not, must be ended by an agreement between the belligerents to make peace or at least to observe an armistice.

The Yoruba word '*Ogun*' implies a war, a battle, or a skirmish. Early European writers were even less helpful as they often described 'raid', 'expedition', or 'campaign' as wars.<sup>2</sup> With this background in military terminology, does any of the so called Yoruba wars qualify to be so described? To answer this question, let us examine very briefly, a few of the various 'wars'.

The annual Oyo invasion of Dahomey in the 18th century was regularly in the dry season. Up to the mid-19th century, climatic conditions virtually regulated military operations. Soldiers carried out their military activities during the dry season and returned to work on their farms as soon as the rains came. It was required of the *Alaafin* in Oyo kingdom to declare and wage 'war' within the first three years of his reign. The *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo* too, was expected to wage 'war' soon after his appointment in order to live up to the legend of his office. Among the Ibadan, it was the practice that after the conferment of military titles, the recipients seize the earliest available opportunity to prove their suitability for their titles. Apart from the invasions of Dahomey which in political terms could be described as wars, most of the examples given above were mainly of short duration, lasting only one campaign, and always ended with the complete capitulation of one of the contestants. At best these 'wars' were raids.

By the mid-19th century, 'wars' were fought by professional armies who gradually displaced the militia.<sup>3</sup> Such armies, supplied with expensive imported weapons and ammunition, were able to fight continuously for much longer periods as they became less affected by climatic seasonal changes. The Ijaye War of the 1860s, and the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War were examples of wars of longer duration, comprising several battles and campaigns.

### Implements of War

Wars cannot be fought without pre-war readiness. Preparations include being well equipped with sufficient number of capable militias who are in good possession of

fighting implements, both physical and meta-physical weapons.

There is no doubt that superior weapons could be a decisive factor in wars. This was the case in the colonial wars like the Lagos War (1851), Ijebu War (1892) and the Benin Massacre of 1897 fought between Britain and the various states which now make up Nigeria. Weapons could hold the balance between peace and war. A case in point was when Ibadan during the dry season of 1884–85, acquired some snider rifles and cartridges and thus held their own against the Ekitiparapo. This was the situation that developed into a stalemate and to a great extent encouraged both sides to seek solution at the negotiating table.

There is a lot of evidence that the various implements we are about to consider were actually used in Yorubaland. Apart from references in the records and writings of European visitors of Old Oyo, some of these weapons have been preserved as heir-looms by various warrior families. Such families proudly display these weapons on festive occasions or to any visitor who shows the slightest interest as evidence that their ancestors participated gallantly in the pre-colonial wars.

Most of the weapons used by the Yoruba armies were made locally by skilled craftsmen. While these craftsmen organised themselves into guilds or associations, most practised their profession in the various family compounds under the protection of town chiefs. The blacksmiths, for example, as far as warfare was concerned, were a very important group. They worked on iron, producing iron points for arrows, lance-heads, swords, knives and cutlasses. Blacksmiths worked in close co-operation with the armies, replacing exhausted stock of arrows, mending damaged spears and swords, fabricating iron bullets from pieces of waste iron and repairing guns. The blacksmiths occupied a prominent place within the Ekitiparapo Camp during the Kiriji War. This is confirmed because the site of the smithy is still easily recognisable as it is marked by a large collection of disused forges and stone anvils.<sup>4</sup>

There seems to be a striking correlation between the provision of weapons and the distribution of power. When the main weapon was the bow and arrows, which was obtained locally and cheaply and therefore was within the easy reach of each warrior, the army was the militia type. The militia was raised quickly and cheaply in the event of a war. The period of engagement in hostilities was usually brief. The mobilisation of such a force, however, did not readily lend itself to a central command and control. Such an army never embarked on long continuous campaigns. This was the situation in most of the Ekiti states before the Kiriji War. As warfare became more complex, the demand for better-quality weapons, such as swords with steel blades, fire-arms and horses became more obvious. These items were not obtained locally. Some had to be imported from great distances and were expensive and therefore beyond the reach of the ordinary citizen-soldier. This required an organisation much superior to what had hitherto obtained; — a central organisation with power and authority to purchase these expensive items, store them in times of peace, and make them available to a selected group of loyal citizens or followers, in the event of war. This role was filled by the *Oba*, on behalf of the state or by powerful chiefs and adventurous citizens. Ogedengbe of Ilesa, and Aduloju of Ado were some of such citizens who had little or no connections with royalty or the chiefly class who came into prominence through successfully raising their own personal armies. This was why they were able to carry out independent raids and campaigns of their own. In Ibadan, each chief or war lord, had his own



private standing army. This then was the situation in Yorubaland in the 19th century. In the various wars of the 19th century, "the personal armies of the chiefs constituted the professional core of the armies of each state". The larger part of the fighting forces in the service of each state, however was made up of citizen levees called into being by the authorities of the state. The only exceptions here were Ijaye and Ibadan. The whole of Ijaye was more or less Kurumi's personal army, while practically all of the Ibadan army, in any war, was a combination of the personal armies of the Ibadan War Chiefs.

## The Weapons

### Clubs – *Kumo*:

The club is most likely the oldest and certainly the simplest weapon. The earliest club must have been a tree branch cut and trimmed such that one end looks like a head, and therefore making it suitable as a percussion weapon. The club was used either as a cudgel or as a throwing stick. A simple weapon such as this, until recently, was a common sight in village homes where it was very handy in dealing with uninvited 'nocturnal guests'.

The Yoruba maxim "it is ridiculous to complain of having no weapon when you are in a fight in the forest", is an obvious reference to the ready availability of this weapon. Clubs studded with nails, others of iron with coils, are forms which have evolved from this basic wooden weapon. The clubs or batons which can be regarded as secondary armament for the Nigeria Police might well be a modern version of this ancient weapon since they serve almost identical purpose. The war captains of Oyo, and their leaders, the *Eso*, *Are-Ona-Kakanfo* were armed with batons only. These might have been the precursor of the modern Army Officer's swagger cane and the field Marshal's baton.

### Sling and Catapult – *Akatampo*

The sling and catapult were simple missiles for hurling pebbles against a target. They were one of the earliest weapons of the *eso*, hence the oriki of *Eso*:

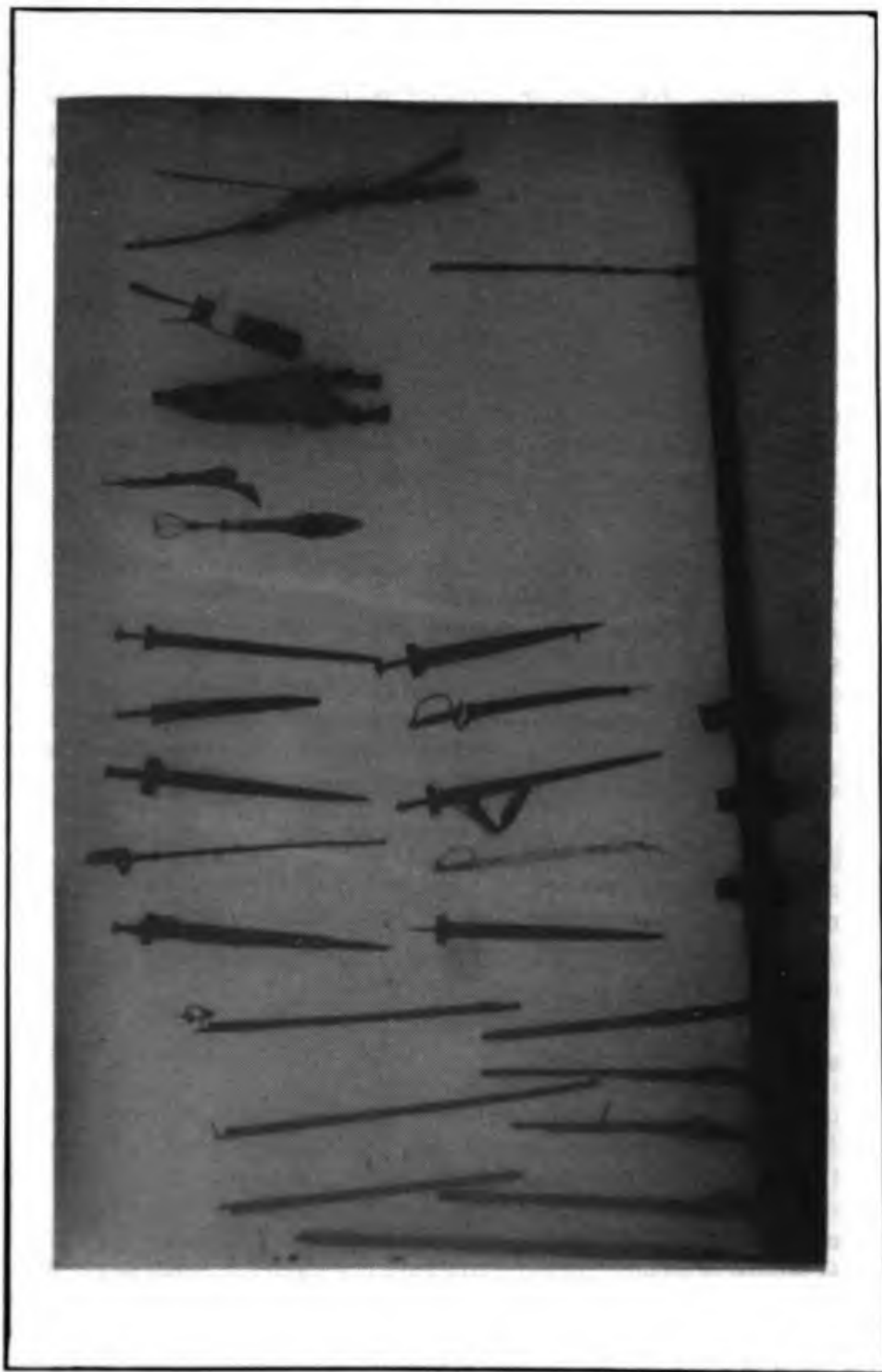
Omo Iyan bi mi L'olu  
Ikoyi omo eru Ofa,  
Akatampo ni won fi da'woṣo eyin,  
Orun tereṣe ni won fi so yin l'oruko.<sup>5</sup>

#### Translation

The descendant of Iyanbimlolu  
Ikoyi the descendant of one  
Who carried a load of arrows  
With a sling.  
You were named with a slim long arrow.

### Bow and Arrow – *Ofa*:

Next in order of antiquity comes the bow and arrow which R.S. Smith says is "held to be man's first invention for accumulating and storing energy"<sup>6</sup>. This weapon comprises three parts, the arrow (*ofa*) which is the ammunition, an elastic bow string (*orun*) and the stave on which the bow is mounted. Usually, the stave is made from strong twigs like *ito* or *ijan*. For maximum effect, the arrow is "tipped" in poison. The Igbara (Ebira), a close neighbour of the Yoruba were said to excel in the use of this weapon hence their oriki "omo ajita'fa". Yoruba bows had an estimated effective range of 50 – 75 yards and



**Fig.18.1** *War Implements*



**Fig. 18.2:** *Carved wooden headgear for protecting the head in battle*

were powerful enough to kill an elephant at close range. Their long range fire power was not only suitable for open country but equally useful in the forest area. While bows and arrows were mainly infantry weapons records have confirmed that the Oyo cavalry also used the bows up to the first half of the 19th century when they were still engaging in frequent archery practice and were so skilled that they could send their arrows through a small opening in a wall "upwards of a hundred yards distance".<sup>7</sup> The usefulness of the bow was great in the open country of the Savannah, north of Yorubaland, but as the Yoruba moved into the forest region where the range became much shorter, a more powerful crossbow came into use. Crossbows, a specialised form of bow, more suitable for defence, were reported to have been used in the Ijaye War.<sup>8</sup>

### **Swords:**

Swords were for many centuries the main individual weapon of the Yoruba soldier. It was meant for close-quarter fighting suitable for stabbing, cutting and slashing the enemy. It was the major infantry weapon until guns were introduced on a large scale in the second half of the 19th century.

There were various forms of swords, but as a weapon, the sword consisted typically of a long, straight or slightly curved blade, sharp-edged on one side or both sides, with one end pointed and the other fixed in a quilt or handle. The most widely used type was the broad-bladed *agedengbe*. There were also the straight, double-edged and three-feet-long swords used by Egba soldiers at Ijaye;<sup>9</sup> there were also the double-edged, slightly tapering variant like the four-feet-long *Ajaka* sword of Owo.<sup>10</sup> Apart from being a weapon of war it was also a symbol of military power, authority, rank and honour. When used as a symbol of office, the sword usually had an elaborately decorated quilt.

### **Dagger And Throwing Knives:**

The dagger was carried along with the sword. It is much shorter than a sword, and has a sharp-pointed blade. It is used for stabbing at close range.

### **Spear:**

The spear consisted of a long staff to which a sharp head is fixed. While the sword was mainly for close range fighting, the spear was employed for both close and long range fighting. The various types of spears were distinguished by the use to which they were put. They were called 'lances' (*esin*) when carried by cavalry and intended for thrusting; 'spears' (*oko*) when used by infantry or cavalry and were employed as 'javelins'.

By the mid-19th century when the theatre of war had changed from the open country of the north to the woody forest of the south, the need for spears was greatly reduced. They were therefore gradually replaced by muskets. Captain Jones, an observer at the Ijaye War in 1861, was reported to have seen "but very few spearmen".<sup>11</sup> The spear, like the sword, was also a symbol of honour and office.

### **Firearms:**

The Portuguese introduced firearms to the West Coast of Africa during their expeditions in the mid-15th century. Records confirm that the Portuguese visited ancient Benin kingdom among other places. It is probable that guns were introduced to that kingdom



during one of such many visits. This might lend credibility to the tradition that Benin armies used guns during their invasion of some parts of eastern Yorubaland in the 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>12</sup> Though it has been reported that during the expansion of the old Oyo Empire to the coast, its cavalry in 1726, met and overcame a Dahomean force armed with muskets.

After the pioneering activity of the Portuguese, nationals from other European countries, notably the English, Dutch and Danes, began to sell muskets to West Africans. Though these guns were known as 'Dane guns' after the Danes, the Dutch were the major sellers. By 1750, most of the Dane guns came from Holland. However, it was not until the 19th century that firearms became the predominant weapon of Yoruba armies. The Ijebu army is reputed to have first used firearms on a large scale during the Owu War of the 1820s. Thereafter, it became a common possession of every other army in Yorubaland. The predominant guns during this period were the muzzle-loading muskets which consisted of a variety of flintlock guns and cap guns. These guns were often inaccurate and therefore ineffective in battle. Their barrels were prone to burst, thus making them probably more dangerous to the user than the enemy. However with a range of about 200 yards, they were clearly an improvement on the traditional weapons — bows and arrows, swords and spears. The Dane guns required an interval of three to four minutes between volleys for re-loading.

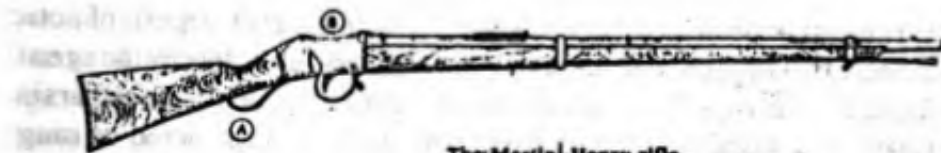
More sophisticated guns known as breech-loading rifles were introduced to the West African market in the second half of the 19th century. The Egba army is said to have used a few breech-loaders during the Ijaye War.<sup>13</sup> By the 1880s, repeaters had been adopted by American and European armies. The single-shot breech-loading rifles which thus became obsolete in Europe were exported to West Africa. Though obsolete in Europe, these new guns were vastly superior in range and accuracy to the Dane guns. The acquisition of some of these new guns early in the 1880s by the Ekitiparapo forces marked an important turning point in the history of the Kiriji War. By 1892, The Ijebu army was equipped with numerous snider rifles and abundant cartridges.

For the Yoruba, guns did not serve military purposes only. They were used in hunting. Even today, the flintlock musket, still called 'Dane gun', is all that majority of Yoruba hunters have.

There is not much evidence that artillery weapons were used by Yoruba armies in pre-colonial times. The Ijebu were said to have had a few cannons early in the 19th century but there is no record that they were ever used. At the instance of the Christian Missionaries, the British Government around 1850, presented to the Egba seven 'field pieces'. Even after Commander Forbes (RN) had given lessons in gunnery in 1851 to some Egba soldiers, these guns were not put to use in battle.<sup>14</sup> It is only in Lagos that guns mounted on batteries along the water front, were reported to have been used to resist British attack of 1851.<sup>15</sup> Rockets as weapons, were very effective, setting fire to dry bush and to thatched roofs, such as nearly all buildings in Yorubaland had in pre-colonial times. Casualties due to rockets were few, but their noise and gunfire were terrifying. The British used rockets against Porto Novo in 1861, against the Egba at Ikorodu in 1865 and against the Ijebu at Imagbon in 1892. The Ekitiparapo were the only army to acquire a weapon in the semblance of a rocket, during the Kiriji War. This acquisition turned out to be signal rockets; hence the Ijesa 'shooting stars'.<sup>16</sup>



**Fig.18.3:** *Stone axes, also used as war implements in the 19th Century*



The Martini-Henry rifle

Designed by Alexander Henry, using the Austrian Martini action devised in 1868. Lever (A) was depressed; breech (B) opened and a round inserted. Used by British troops until 1891.



The Lee-Metford rifle (1888)

This rifle was adopted by the British army in 1888. It had a bolt action (A) and a spring loaded magazine (B) holding five rounds of .303 ammunition. This weapon was to be the basis of the standard SMLE (Short Magazine Lee-Enfield) destined to be used throughout the world wars and beyond.

### The Maxim machine gun (1891)

Hiram Maxim developed this water-cooled machine gun in London in 1884-5. Belt ammunition was fed into the weapon at (A). The cocking handle (B) operated the cock and inserted a round into the breach (C). The spent round was ejected at (D) and the process automatically repeated.

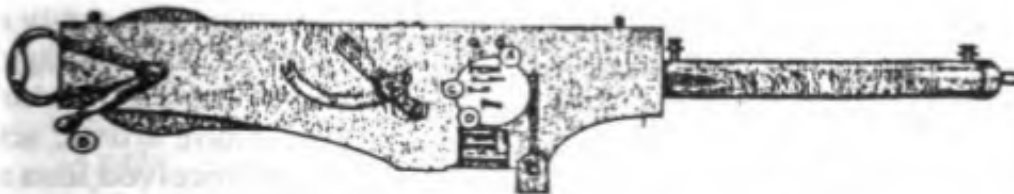


Fig.18.4: Some types of European weapons in use during the Yoruba wars

### **Para-Military Weapons**

There are other implements or weapons which are instrumental to winning wars, giving extra psychological impetus to the militias. These include:

#### **Magical Art (Metaphysical Elements)**

This is an art or an activity of expression which creates a deposit of actions or habits in the agents. These created habits become "things" utilisable by the agents for ulterior ends. Art has always been functional in human life. It serves as catharsis.<sup>17</sup> Art to the Africans in general is functional (utilitarian) as well as sacred or magical. Art, so referred to as magical, is aimed ultimately at producing certain states of mind in certain persons.

The traditional religions of the Yoruba are closely related or associated with the creative arts. The religions equally have beliefs and practices that are sacred and magical.<sup>17</sup> In other words, both art and magic are central in Yoruba religions and in their beliefs. They are indistinguishable. They dovetail into each other. Lucas explains further:

.....to understand how completely the belief in magic penetrated to the whole substance of life, dominating popular custom and constantly appearing in the simplest acts of daily household routine.... It constituted the very atmosphere in which the men of early oriental world lived. Without the saving and salutary influence of such magical agencies constantly invoked, the life of an ancient household in the East was unthinkable.<sup>18</sup>

The Yoruba have firm belief in the reality of the unseen spirits and in the use of magical arts to control the phenomenon of nature, the physical world and the mental world. Magic is used by the Yoruba to secure contact with the invisibles and to seek favour from the unseen spirits through such practices as charms, incantations and sacrifices. In Yorubaland, magic could work either positively or negatively; when it works negatively, it becomes a taboo but when it works positively, it is said to be therapeutic.

During war, magical practices are often displayed. In all the Yoruba wars, magical displays played significant roles in winning and in surviving.<sup>20</sup>

The terms magic and art are employed here to denote certain practices current in Yoruba warlike people. The oneness or the relationship between magic and art are both strong and intimate. They are two in one form. Magical practices invariably are not peripheral but are central elements in war. Such magical practices, tagged magical arts include among others, war dance, war songs, incantations, charms, masking and masquerades, carvings, modellings and many others. They involve artistic activities which latter function in two major ways; (i) as means to a preconceived idea and (ii) as agents to arouse emotions. Magical art is utilitarian and an essential means to preconditioned ends. Art so used is quasi-artistic.<sup>21</sup> The end of magical art is obviously and mainly the arousing of emotions. Magical art is not intended for amusement, though one can talk of magical displays as amusing. However, magical displays are pseudo-magical arts. What is magical to the Yoruba is basically designed to stimulate emotions valuable for practical life. It is an art dedicated to the service of the community.

The emotional effects, partly on the performers themselves and partly on the victims



(opponents), do have either favourable or unfavourable effects. The primary function of all magical arts, is to generate in the agent or agents certain emotions that are considered necessary or useful for pre-conceived results. Secondly, it is to generate in others (opponents), emotions usually detrimental.

Anyone with sufficient psychological knowledge who understands the effect emotions have on the success or failure of our undertakings, will know that art plays magical functions during war and in our ordinary everyday employments.

Art as magic, according to the beliefs of the Yoruba, is that it can perform functions other people think impossible.<sup>22</sup> The Yoruba have magic for nearly everything. For example, there is magic to make rain fall and to stop the spread of diseases in the community. That belief or practice may be funny to non-Africans or non-believers in African arts. The Western world for instance has a different understanding of the magical practices in Africa. To the Western critic, magic is practised in savage societies. It is also recognised as less civilised and less educative.<sup>23</sup> This notion of magic is not correct. It only shows ignorance of other peoples' cultures. Magical art among the Yoruba is a traditional science aimed at achieving a desired end. It is a science every Yoruba community has. With magical arts alone, the attacked or the war opponents could be made to withdraw or submit without physically fighting the war. And even in physical attacks, the opponents are emotionally worked-out into defeat.

### **Some Yoruba Warfare Magical Arts/Metaphysical Implements**

Magic is a representational and evocative art, where the emotion evoked is an emotion valued on account of its function in practical life. Emotion is evoked in order that it may discharge that function, and fed by the generative or focusing magical activity into the practical life that needs it. There is need to highlight some of the magical arts of the Yoruba as used in the warfare.

Here are a few examples:

#### **War Charms:**

Among the many Yoruba charms are

- i. **"Ogun Ifoju"**— A supernatural means of inflicting blindness. To go about this, a mud or wooden image of the victim is created. Upon this image, appropriate incantations are chanted, then the eyes of the image are pierced and immediately or about the same time, the eyes of the victim become blind. This medium is often used as a means of attacking opponents while the victim is still in his camp.
- ii. **"Apeta"**— (invocation shooting) for this process, a mud image of the person to be killed is created. Upon the model or image, the name of the victim is called and the image is shot. Instantly the victim becomes sick and may eventually die. If a counter charm is administered by the victim, he may survive.
- iii. **"Stigidi"**— This is an object, made for a special occasion. It is a human image made from clay, decorated with cowrie shells, and charmed to make it supernatural. It is then sent on missions to destroy.
- iv. **The use of the "bull roarer" (oro)** in Yorubaland is intended partly to arouse certain emotions. When going to war, warriors carry along with them,

materials that can arouse emotions and instil fears in their opponents.

- v. **Amulets**— Bindings such as amulets of various sizes are worn round the waist, neck and arms. An examples is: (*Ifunpa*). A magical art commonly worn by most if not all the militias. The amulets serve multi-purpose functions such as — *Okigbe* — a protective charm worn against cuts; *Isiju* — charm for invisibility by opponents; *Egbe* — charm for mysterious disappearance from scene of danger or attack; *Aki-iya* — charm worn to become very bold or fearless; and many others for varied purposes.
- vi. **Masking and Masquerading** — Masquerade as an art was used in the past by the war fighters to wage war against their victims. The masquerade with his followers would vigorously and undauntedly enter villages or towns to besiege them, set their houses ablaze, kill and capture the inhabitants. The Ibadan warriors went to wars against their neighbouring districts, such as Egbe, Ijebu Ekiti and the, Ilorin. In some of these wars, they came back home with some war – masquerades. For example, *Alapansapa* and *Oloolu* of Ibadan.
- vii. **The Yoruba War Standard (Staff)** — A staff richly decked with charms and amulets, the Yoruba War Standard, was a symbol of strength to which was ascribed some mysterious power. It was a rallying point and symbol of authority much the same way the Usman dan Fodio flag was to the warriors of the Fulani Jihad and to some extent, like the regimental colours were to the various British army regiments. At the commencement of any campaign, the Yoruba god of war, *Ogun*, was propitiated and sacrifices were offered to the war Standard.  
An item though not a weapon but important adjunct to war was the *War Sandard*. This may be seen as impediments of seemingly lesser value than weapons but nevertheless of tremendous importance to morale.
- viii. **Dress and Armour** — The typical dress for military operations was the *togo*, a sleeveless jacket without a collar, and open in the front. A turban was wrapped round the waist as a belt. The *togo* was worn on *Kafo Sokoto*, a pair of tight-legged trousers which reached the ankles. The *togo* jacket often had charms and cowrie shells stitched on them. Since this dress was worn only by soldiers on active service, it helped to identify them, and therefore it could be described as a uniform. The only recorded attempt to introduce a uniform different from the *togo* and the *Kafo* was when some soldiers from the Ijesa army were selected to be trained to handle the breech-loading snider rifles newly introduced by Labinjo Gureje and Apará — Ijesa citizens who resided in Lagos. This select group was known as the Rifle Corps and a special uniform was designed for them.

The padded war dresses and leather aprons worn by some were the nearest to a protective armour against enemy weapons. It appears that the chain — mail which was common among the Hausa and Fulani troops was not used by Yoruba soldiers.

From all indications, the Yoruba militias used various means to fight their wars. They fought with visible weapons, so also did they fight with spiritual and magical "implements" as enumerated. In short, magical art or activity is a kind of dynamo supplying the mechanism of practical life with the emotional current that drives it. Thus

magic among the Yoruba might be regarded as a necessity for every situation and condition of man.

## **Drums**

The drum especially the "talking drum" occupies a unique place in the life of the Yoruba. The drum serves several religious, social and military purposes. Only the military use is examined here, briefly. The drum was used for relaying intelligence. It was possible to communicate the presence of the enemies in one village to another with a view to warning and alerting the citizens of the other village.

Drumming played a most notable part during the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War. According to Samuel Johnson, "it won and lost for the Ilorins, it lost and won for the Ibadans."<sup>24</sup> Yoruba militias received so much reinforcement from war-drum rollings. Sounds and messages of courage went deep into the nerves of the battle-men! Drum rollings, to the fighters was not mere amusement, but of magical importance. It was indispensable in warfare. It was an important language of war, reminding the fighters of their past masters and their contributions for posterity. Another significant function of drumming at the battle field was the revelation of situations to the fighters. Drumming is a solidarity medium, transpositioning and facilitating the weary minds to courage and determination to win.

More marks of greatness, fearlessness and boldness were attained by men who comprehended the language of drums, and this made them ever ready to win or face death. Again, as Samuel Johnson reported, "When the rolling of the drum was not perfect in style, they therefore suspected treachery and communicated their fears to their master."<sup>25</sup>

Not only does drumming energise the fighters, it, at the same time, renders the opponents to become cowards. During the Kiriji War, the war leaders, like the *Balogun* Akintola, called "Kiniun Onibudo" from Ibadan had his famous drummers put more impetus into the fighters through his war-cry and drum rollings.

Through words of encouragement, and regular references to his 'oriki' by the drummers, a soldier, in an outburst of bravado and gallantry could perform a feat equivalent to that of seven men!

In the peak of battles, drums were used to communicate orders or information from one sector to another. The drums were also employed to confuse or deceive the enemy, and in the process change the course of the battle as it happened at Ijaye. During the Ijaye War, between Ijaye and Ibadan, the Egba while fighting on the side of Kurumi were gaining "grounds" at their own theatre of operations against Ibadan.

Johnson describes how through skillful mimicry, Fabunmi's drummers successfully deceived Ilori, an Ibadan commander, into believing that the drummers were part of a reinforcement from the Ibadan army. This led to Ilori's capture. Less than 20 years before Ilori's incident, Ilori's father, Ogunmola, the great Ibadan general, had employed similar tactics at the Ijaye War to achieve a resounding victory over Kurumi (see chapter 21 of this work).

## **Music/War Songs**

The Yorubas have it in their sayings that "*Orin ni n saaju ote*" meaning "Songs precede quarrel". War songs are evocative. As soon as people hear war songs, with all the



inherent messages, they jump into action. Common among the war songs are the *"Ijale ode"* that is, the hunters' songs.

Yoruba armies advancing to war, were always accompanied by their own musicians, mainly drummers, flutists, trumpeters and praise singers. There are a few examples. Before leaving the city gate or the camp in preparation to meet the enemy, the drummer tauntingly reminds the timid youth:

- (a) *Oke odaju ni a nre yii*  
*Eniti o ba ni iya k'o pada lehin wa,*  
*Eniti o ba bi baba bi ki o maa ka lo.*

To encourage the weary or faint hearted,

- (b) *Oolee se bii baba re,*  
*Bi eru ba nba o o wi o,*  
*Eru ko ba omo Balogun*  
*Eni o duro d'ogun*  
*Awowo a wo o*  
*Itakun to ba ni ki erin ma de aalo*  
*Oun erin ni jo n lo.*

Some of these songs were very derogatory and offensive and enervating to the opponents, while it enkindles the victors at war-fields. Such songs could be very disparaging and offensive to the opponents who in annoyance and frustration that their effort was not recognised, relent and virtually withdraw. This contributed immensely to the defeat of Ijaye by Ibadan.<sup>26</sup>

### War Dance<sup>27</sup>

This activity is to work up warriors' emotions. They dance themselves into the conviction of their invincibility. Any war undertaken without proper war dance might end up in defeat. It is like a warrior taking his war implements to the battle field without performing all the proper magical arts. He may not succeed in the war.

It means therefore, that whether in warfare or peace time, morale is important. The function of magic is therefore to develop morale or destroy it. If, for example, the opposing army spied the war-dance of its adversary and saw how magnificently it was done and the frenzy state, they might slink away and submit without battle. The purpose of war dance is to innervate warriors' courage up to the point of attacking their opponents. The opponents' will to engage in an encounter may be drastically weakened by the dance alone. Dance has always been magical, and so it is still among Yoruba warriors, though there are contemporary forms of style.

### War Vehicles/Transportation

Horses are not weapons of war but their use in war marks them out for consideration. These were the most efficient and fastest means of transporting soldiers into action. Soldiers who rode on horse back to battle constituted a distinct unit known as the cavalry. For quick movement, and effective command and control, commanders of infantry units and their orderlies rode on horse back. In the modern army, troops are now transported to battle in mechanical vehicles, such as tanks or armoured cars.

Oyo-Ile, the capital of the old Oyo Empire, was situated in the open grassland of Yorubaland close to the states of present day Northern Nigeria. In the heyday of the empire, Oyo forces regularly imported large number of horses from across the Niger.



Oyo was famous for its cavalry. The cavalry played major roles in the expansion of the empire to the Coast; a distance of over 200 miles (i.e. 320 kilometres.)

Before the 19th century, the cavalry formed the backbone of the armies. After the fall of the empire and the consequent shift of its population into the forest of the south, the role of the cavalry diminished considerably but not completely, for as at 1881, Ibadan horsemen still had an opportunity to prove their mettle. These horsemen who had been left to guard the city while the Ibadan army was engaged by Ekitiparapo forces on the forest hills of Igbajo, charged and completely routed an Ijebu force which had persistently carried out menacing raids on Ibadan farms. The horses were an unaccustomed and terrifying sight to the Ijebu troops. Apart from the incident described above and a few involving Ibadan and Ilorin troops where Ibadan repeatedly proved the better side, not much use was found for the cavalry during the 19th century Yoruba wars. The large number of horses all over Yorubaland were used for conveying the various commanders and also used by *Obas* and Chiefs on ceremonial occasions.

### War Canoes

The war canoes provided mobility for troops on the relatively unruffled waters of the lagoons and rivers of southern Yorubaland inhabited by the Ijebu, Egun, Awori, Ikale and Ilaje. The canoe was made by felling a selected tree, trimming and excavating the trunk, hence the name dug-out canoe.

War canoes were of various sizes. The larger canoes made the crossing of lagoons and rivers easy for land armies. Some canoes were large enough to ferry up to 100 men with their provisions. The typical war canoe was of a much smaller size. The small size made the craft more stable and increased its manoeuvrability.

### Tactics

The view is strongly held in various quarters that success in war depends more on superior organisation and morale than on superior weapons. This of course is a debatable point if examples from various battles and wars are anything to go by. In 1726, the Oyo cavalry armed with lances defeated Dahomean forces armed with muskets. Apart from the noise of the Dahomeans guns which frightened Oyo horses initially, new and superior as they were to Yoruba warfare, the guns did not appear to have helped the Dahomeans avert defeat. In 1892, a large Ijebu army equipped with snider rifles and abundant cartridges was defeated by a small British-led force. During the Kiriji War, from 1880-84, the Ekitiparapo possessed superior fire-power, yet they were unable to defeat the Ibadan.

A nation going to war must have an overall plan or a strategy for winning the war. As we have observed earlier on, a war could be fought in several battles taking place under various conditions and in different locations. As no two battles are ever the same, preparations for each battle differ. Such preparations will take into account the estimated strength of the enemy, the resources available to meet such an adversary and a careful consideration of the deployment of such resources to the ground where the battle is likely to be fought. Victory at a military engagement or battle therefore will depend on the skill with which a commander displays and directs all the military resources, both human and material resources at its disposal. It is this skill that is described as Tactics. So while tactics wins a battle, an overall strategy wins a war.

Before a decision is taken to embark on a military operation, intelligence gathering is an indispensable preliminary. This aspect of warfare was not neglected by the Yorubas. In the event of war the "*Ode Ajagun*" (hunters) were the first to be mobilised. They formed the advanced party of the army. On account of their thorough knowledge of the terrain and natural endowments as hunters, they could move as close to enemy territory as discretion permitted, climb unto the top of tall trees and generally carry out reconnaissances and bring back useful information about the enemy which will assist a military commander plan his operation effectively.

At every stage in warfare, appeal to the supernatural is prominent. Before a final decision to make war, *Ifa* diviners were consulted. Even after *ifa* had given the go ahead for war, certain days were deemed unpropitious. On these days, no military operations or even negotiations for peace, were undertaken. The next move might be to arrange for spies to bury charms and magical substances in the putative enemy territory. The supposed effect of these substances was to neutralise enemy magical preparations and possibly spread some infectious diseases among the citizens of the enemy country.

Before the army advanced from their home base, sacrifices were offered to *Ogun*, the god of war, and to the War Standard. The warriors smeared their weapons with magical portions and the blood of the victims sacrificed. Charms and amulets (*Tira*) were worn round various parts of their body or stitched on to their battle dress and in case of cavalry men, these items were worn round the horses' necks or fixed on to the saddle. Sacred objects to which magical powers were ascribed were brought into battle.

Night warfare was rarely practised. The preference was for the dawn attack. Movement could be under the cover of darkness as practised by Dahomey in her many wars against the Egba. The order of march into battle was dictated mainly by the nature of the ground. While in forest country, it had to be of necessity, in a single file. In many countries, a fairly well defined vanguard, main body and rear guard formation was normal. Among the Oyo and later Ibadan, the titles of the chiefs indicated their positions and the positions of the troops they command, in battle. The *Osi* chiefs and their troops were on the left while the *Otun* chiefs and their troops were on the right of the *Balogun* who was in the middle. The *Balogun* went forward only when the battle situation demanded it, as confirmed by this address from Balogun Ibikunle's praise singers narrated thus:

Ibikunle ma saju ogun mo  
Baale Ibadan ma kehin ogun  
Aarin gbungbun l'alawo ekun n'wa  
Ogun ki i pa alawo ekun laarin ogun.<sup>24</sup>

Before the fall of old Oyo, most of the Yoruba warfare took place in the savannah areas of the northern and western Yorubaland. The military might of the Old Oyo Empire was its great cavalry. The open country was most suitable for the use of horses. On horse back, the troops moved swiftly to their objective. On arrival, battle was opened by the spearmen who advanced, throwing their spears at the enemy. Following closely at the rear were archers who discharged their arrows over the spearmen's heads.

The decline and subsequent fall of the Old Oyo Empire towards the end of the 18th century led to mass exodus of Oyo citizens from the north to the south. From the refugee settlements emerged large centres of populations notably Ibadan, Ijaye and New Oyo.

Ibadan, founded on the forest edge, in its bid to acquire recognition as the main successor state to Old Oyo, sought to establish its political control over towns in Osun, Igbomina, Ekiti, Ijesa and Akoko. Apart from Igbomina and parts of Osun, these towns were mostly in the tropical forest belt of Yorubaland. In most of the 'wars' Ibadan had to fight therefore, the greatly restricted visibility and difficulty of movement in the forest dictated tactics different from those suitable for the open country. Ambush was a common form of warfare. Troops concealed themselves in small parties and pounced on their enemy, armed with swords and clubs, weapons suitable for hand-to-hand fighting, rather than bows and spears. Out-flanking operations were commonly practised. As movement was greatly hampered, the forest was most unsuitable for the cavalry as the horses and their riders became easy targets under such conditions. The Ilorin Fulani learnt this bitter lesson during their campaign against the Ijesa (1830) during the *Pole War*.

The introduction of firearms did not make much difference to the tactics of forest warfare. Not much use was made of guns until the 1820s. In fact, it was not until the 1840s that guns became common. Up till about 1880, the most common type of guns were the Dane or 'trade' guns.<sup>29</sup> These muzzle-loading guns consist of a variety of cap guns and flint lock guns. Their introduction led to changes in military organisation and tactics. We have a vivid description of the tactics practised at the early stages of the Kiriji War when the Dane guns were the predominant weapon employed by both sides.

Their (the Dane guns) range was limited and they had the added disadvantage that once the gunman had discharged a shot, he needed some three or four minutes at least to reload... Each battle still consisted of a series of frontal attacks. The armies faced each other across the field and opened fire at each other. This fire was kept up by dividing the whole army into a number of parts (Ekiti divided their forces into four parts). When one part had discharged its Dane guns, it withdrew to the rear to reload – and so on throughout the battle. When a side broke under the fire, the other pursued to take captives.

In this basic formation, there was, however, room for variation and manoeuvres. The Ibadan were more skillful in this type of fighting than probably any other people in Yorubaland. After the fire had been kept up for a while, the Ibadan would suddenly drop their guns and charge with their drawn swords against the enemy's line. The surprise effect of such charges had won brilliant victories for them in the past and at the beginning of the Kiriji War, frequently brought in good results.<sup>30</sup>

It was such tactics as aptly described above that won the Ikirun battle Jalumi 'War' for the Balogun Ajayi Ogboriefon in 1878.<sup>31</sup>

Breech-loading rifles were introduced into Yoruba warfare first by the Egba, at the latter stages of the Ijaye War and then by the Ekitiparapo by the mid-1880s during the Kiriji War. The immediate effect of the introduction of the breech-loading rifles which were considerably more efficient than the Dane guns, was the discarding of the practice whereby armies were drawn up face-to-face for frontal attacks. In order to avoid the devastating effect of these new rifles, both sides had to develop techniques of trench warfare; camp fortification practices were increased.

Long sieges were a major characteristic of Yoruba warfare in the 19th century. Kiriji



Kiriji War was the climax of it all. In siege operations with their prominent fortifications, the defenders were at an advantage only at the initial stages of the operation. The major aim of a siege was to starve out the inhabitants of the besieged town by depriving them of access to the outside world, especially their farms and other sources of food. In the event of a protracted siege such as the siege on Ido-Ani by Ogedengbe, which lasted for about three years, the defenders would capitulate. At Kiriji, the story was different. Both forces were camped outside towns and therefore were equally deprived of the advantages of comfort and the regular provision of food and water. As the war became protracted, both camps developed all the attributes and characteristics of regular towns, with market places, surrounding farms, defensive walls and even some family life. We have also observed that the brief advantage Ekitiparapo had with the acquisition of new weapons, soon disappeared when Ibadan later acquired the same type of weapons. With both contestants equally matched in determination and weaponry, no wonder the siege deteriorated into a virtual stalemate.

It was the Prophet Muhammad who was reputed to have observed that "war is trickery". The tactics employed by various Yoruba commanders often contained some prominent element of trickery. We have seen how the drums were used effectively on the Egba at Ijaye, and on the fleeing citizens of Ijaye during Ogunmola's assault on the city. We have noted earlier, how the drum trick was played by Fabunmi on Ogunmola's son, Ilori, at the commencement of the Ikirun battle.

### Naval Warfare

Only the Ijebu, Ikale, Ilaje, Egun and Awori inhabiting the lagoon and coastal region of southern Yorubaland could boast of some form of naval warfare in the 18th and 19th centuries. Their craft was the dug-out canoe. As the shallow waters of the lagoon made hand-to-hand fight possible, the weapons used were the throwing spear, swords and clubs. Even when firearms were introduced, these weapons continued to be used supplementarily up till the mid-19th century. The use of bows and arrows can only be inferred as these were the basic infantry weapons for that period. There are records of war-canoes on which small cannon, six or four pounders, were mounted. Such guns featured prominently when Lagos attacked Badagry in 1783 and in 1851. Ambush was as much a favourite tactics in lagoon and river warfare as it was in land warfare. The long grasses and bush provided excellent cover where the war canoes could hide, awaiting an opportunity to surprise the enemy.

### Conclusion

It is clear from the study of the implements and tactics among the Yoruba that a nation's war capability rests on a number of factors. The availability and effective use of the physical weapon and the impact of the metaphysical elements coupled with good planning or tactics.

The Kiriji War ended virtually in a stalemate. There was no victor and no vanquished. This was a blessing in many ways. The Yoruba tradition of the victor destroying the conquered opponent would have spelt doom for the large populations involved. A soldier reacts to humiliating defeat in one of two ways. He either withdraws to fight again someday or hangs his weapons for ever in frustration. For a soldier who received little or no material gain from Kiriji — (Yoruba soldiers were not paid



salaries) and with all the discomfort and untold deprivations, he is more likely to embrace the latter possibility. But with the verdict at Kiriji, soldiers went back home with a lot of fighting spirit still left in them. This became useful later as some Kiriji veterans readily found gainful employment as members of the newly constituted British constabulary forces at the beginning of the colonial era. Most of the recruits for the constabulary forces, the forerunner of the modern Nigerian Army, apart from Hausas, were from Ibadan, Ekiti, and Egba. This tradition has continued till today as most of the present Yoruba leaders are the descendants of the heroes of Kiriji.

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## Chapter Nineteen

# Supernatural and Herbal Weapons in 19th Century Yoruba Warfare

J.A. Adefila and S.M. Opeola

### Introduction

Perhaps the most controversial statement made by any Nigerian in recent times is the one credited to retired General Olusegun Obasanjo and reported in one of the national dailies on Tuesday, 17 June, 1986. Captioned "Obasanjo advocates use of 'black power'", the sensational front page news report quoted General Obasanjo as insisting that "the blacks will have to use native curse, medicine and charms as well as guns" in order to successfully liquidate the racist South African government. This, apparently, was the General's carefully considered contribution to the debate concerning the black man's struggle for survival in South Africa.

Quite naturally, Obasanjo's contribution evoked all sorts of reactions from the public. Predictably, medicine men from various parts of the country quickly endorsed the General's recommendations and called on the Federal Government to sponsor them in their proposed metaphysical encounter with the evil forces of apartheid.<sup>2</sup> Some concerned private citizens also expressed the view that African medicine *could* and *should* be employed to bring down Botha.<sup>3</sup> In fact, one reputable *The Guardian* writer asserted that "General Obasanjo's proposal borders on genius."<sup>4</sup>

However, some other equally concerned citizens have refused to go along with the former head of state's *juju* option. One columnist described it as "the most bizarre of all the contributions" ever made in the on-going debate as to how to crush Botha's regime.<sup>5</sup> Another one not only rejected the suggestion that *juju* can help a group win a war, but boldly challenged "anyone who thinks his *juju* is effective against nuclear blast to come forward."<sup>6</sup> And, in so far as Ensi Uche is concerned, "there is nothing like mass applications of *juju*... *Juju* don't win no war."<sup>7</sup>

All of these comments notwithstanding, General Obasanjo's recipe for putting an end to apartheid is no doubt a veritable pointer to an enduring phenomenon in traditional African warfare. It is indeed a confirmation of Robert Smith's observation that in West Africa, "appeal to the supernatural was prominent at every stage in warfare".<sup>8</sup> In this paper, we are going to focus primarily on the manifestations of the appeal to the supernatural at various stages of Yoruba warfare during the turbulent years of the 19th century. We will also attempt a critical assessment of the contributions of this appeal as a factor in the determination of success or otherwise in warfare. Most of our illustrations will be drawn from the Ijaye and Kiriji Wars.

## Planning For War

### Divination

It is a well known fact that an essential aspect of Yoruba's preparation for war was to consult the *Ifa* oracle. This was necessary for ensuring that the right decisions were taken concerning the war. The priestly diviner's go-ahead simply had to be obtained before any Yoruba army embarked upon any campaign. The typical Yoruba army was invariably accompanied by a contingent of priests and traditional doctors. While in camp, the *Ifa* oracle was regularly consulted every morning.<sup>9</sup> An ancient Oyo king who relied heavily on oracular guidance was King Ajaka. Tradition has it that he had a retinue of powerful "medicine men" in his service as he prosecuted his expansionist wars with as many as 1,060 of his chiefs and princes.<sup>10</sup> In Ibadan there is the example of *Balogun* Ibikunle who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Ibadan army in the Ijaye War. He was known to have consulted the *Ifa* oracle regularly.<sup>11</sup>

*Ifa* divination evidently played a significant role in the process of establishing various kingdoms all over Yorubaland. Tradition has it that every second year, the *Alaafin* launched a military expedition under a member of the royal family. The Commander invariably took along with him a *Babalawo* (Diviner) to serve as his counsellor. Usually, before setting out, the Commander would consult the *Ifa* oracle for advice. If the expedition eventually succeeded, the commander would then inquire from the oracle concerning the site, size and destiny of the new settlement. The oracular response was invariably based on a particular *Odu-Ifa* which specified the ritual sacrifice to be offered and the customs to be adopted by the inhabitants of the new settlement. Even when individual hunters, aggrieved princess or banished army commanders or chiefs decided to found their own settlements, the same process of *Ifa* divination was adopted. It is therefore not surprising that, today, there is no single Yoruba town without an *Odu Ifa* establishing it.

One important function usually performed by the *Ifa* oracle at the commencement of any campaign was to predict the probable outcome. Such a prediction was often the basis for the decision as to whether the army would engage in battle or not. A notable example is the prediction made by an *Ifa* oracle at Ado-Ekiti concerning the Kiriji War. During the formation of the Ekitiparapo Confederacy (in 1878), Ado, like other Ekiti towns, was invited to join. Initially, their leader Falowo was going to join. But, having sustained the loss of one hand in an accident, he committed suicide.<sup>12</sup> After Falowo's death, Aduloju continued to inspire hopes that Ado might still join the Ekitiparapo. But, for certain compelling reasons, Aduloju vacillated and finally refused to go to Imesi.

An Ado tradition holds that Aduloju refused to join the confederacy because of an oath of friendship to Ibadan he made on his admission to the Ogboni fraternity at Ibadan. But another Ado account credits Aduloju with the statement that the *Ifa* oracle had predicted that neither of the combatants would be able to defeat the other and that the war would become a long and indecisive one.<sup>13</sup> In any case, it is apparent that the decisive factor here was Aduloju's strong belief in the supernatural.

Occasionally Yoruba warriors deliberately ignored the counsel of the oracle. Should the army suffer a defeat in the ensuing war, the defeat was invariably attributed to the people's rejection of the oracle's advice. Such was the case with the Ibadan army at the end of the Kiriji War. The stalemated result of the war became a source of serious concern for the intrepid Ibadan warriors whose sense of military pride must have been severely jolted.



In their search for a clue as to why victory eluded them, they recalled the fact that they had earlier on disobeyed an injunction of the oracle. According to Johnson, many Ibadans attributed their failure in the war to "disobedience to the voice of the oracle in not making Akintola the Balogun."<sup>14</sup> Apparently, the oracle had warned them against the choice of any candidate apart from Akintola. But, because the Ibadan would not accept the candidacy of an untitled chief (Akintola was only an *Aare-Agoro* at the death of *Balogun* Ajayi Ogboriefon), they picked on Ajayi Osungbekun as the new *Balogun*. Thus, when the war ended in a stalemate, it was quite natural for many to attribute Ibadan's failure to "disobedience to the voice of their national oracle."

A similar instance of willful disobedience to the voice of the *Ifa* oracle was reported among the Modakeke during the Kiriji War. The incident involved one Adepoju, a great Modakeke warrior who fought many battles and consequently became a hero among his people. Unfortunately he got killed in a battle between Modakeke and Ile-Ife. According to Chief Osanyintola Amusan Popoola,<sup>15</sup>

Adepoju was told to sacrifice to his ancestors before going to the battle field. He said he was in a hurry to do that. He promised he would sacrifice a human being instead of a goat to his ancestors after the war. Before he got to the battle field his horse stumbled; which was a bad omen. Bad enough to be a warning that the ancestors were not pleased. He ignored the divine advice of the oracle and the warning given by the ancestor's spirit. He stubbornly went to the war to meet his death. He was killed by the Ijebu army.

## Ritual Sacrifice

On the eve of any given military campaign, it was standard practice among the Yoruba to offer elaborate sacrifices to the war god and the weapons of war were usually smeared with magical portions. Of crucial importance at this stage of preparations was the *War Standard* or *Staff* which, according to Johnson, was always an object of worship. Johnson describes it as:

a bamboo pole of about four feet in length and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter.

It is wrapped all over with charms and amulets, and finished with a globular head, the size of a large cocoa-nut (sic.).

The size of course varies with the cost. It is encased in leather with the charms hanging all over it.<sup>16</sup>

Usually, *war standards* were procured from Ile-Ife and were dedicated to Oranyan. Before a war standard was taken out to any campaign, it was mandatory for priests and priestesses to offer human sacrifice to it. The unfortunate victim was usually pushed violently from one god to another, doing homage to them and invoking blessings on the town. By the time the victim finally arrived at the sacred Oranyan grove, he must have been thoroughly exhausted. There he would be decapitated. The blood of the victim was invariably considered sacred and capable of ensuring success in war. For this reason, the *Balogun* (Commander-in-Chief of the army) and his principal officers would come forward to rub the blood on their swords, while the soldiers would also rush in for a drop to rub on their hands.

Having completed all these formalities, the *Balogun* would lead the army out of town to battle almost immediately since it was considered an ill omen for the corpse

of the sacrificial victim to putrefy before the departure of the *Balogun*. The *Balogun's* departure was referred to as "taking the war staff outside the town walls."<sup>17</sup> Thus, for instance, on the 14 October, 1878, the *Balogun* of Ibadan was ordered by the *Aare* to make a hasty preparation and march out to Ikirun in five days. Accordingly, Oranyan was worshipped on the 20 October and the *standard of war* immediately marched northwards to Ikirun to reinforce the small Ibadan contingent during the famous Jalumi War.<sup>18</sup>

Available evidence indicates that it was not always the case that human sacrifice was offered by the Ibadan at the commencement of a war. If the war was considered sufficiently important, human sacrifice would be offered. But then, the Ibadan would not perform the sacrifice by themselves. Rather, according to Messrs Higgins and Smith, "they paid the Ifes to offer a human sacrifice at Ile-Ife to *Ogun* (god of war and iron) on their behalf."<sup>19</sup> This they did not even consider necessary at the commencement of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War because they did not attach much importance to the war initially. As the war gradually escalated beyond expectation however, the war chiefs found it expedient to offer the customary sacrifice. But they were overruled by the then *Aare* (i.e. Latosa) who happened to be a Muslim. It was only after his death in August 1885 that a slave was belatedly offered as sacrifice.

It is significant to note that the Ibadan war chiefs still went ahead to offer the customary human sacrifice after the death of Latosa. Apparently, some leaders had concluded that their inability to overcome the Confederate forces was due to "the neglect they had shown to the god of war." As we shall see later, however, it was not the ritual offering of an unfortunate slave that bailed the Ibadan forces out of their precarious situation on the battle front. Rather, it was their procurement of better weapons that did the trick for them.

## Weapons Of War

### Herbal Spiritual Weapons

The herbal weapons in common use among the Yoruba are *afose*, *epe*, *okigbe* and *Isuju*. They also use herbal bullet proofs like *asaki ibon*, *afobon* and *ayoeta*. Herbal weapons like *egbe* and *afeeri* help the users to disappear at will. *Isuju* is similarly used to conceal the user's physical presence from the enemies, while *eyin-lo-lobe-so* ensures that the enemies miss their mark. *Egungun* masquerades were effectively used in wars as spiritual weapons. Primarily they were used to mimic ancestors coming from heaven to help bail their living children out of trouble. Many important *Egungun* are associated with warfare. Examples are *Alapansanpa* of Ibadan, *Abobiakuro* of Edunabon and *Onimogala* of Moro, to mention a few. These *egungun* usually incorporate into their *ago* or *eeku* (costumes) dangerous charms like *afose* or *awise* which is normally put in deer horn; *oruka ere* (poisoned ring) and *epe* (curse) which are put in cylindrical wooden containers called *apo*.

The primary objective of Yoruba soldiers in utilizing herbal and spiritual weapons was to render themselves absolutely invincible at the battle front. In general, evidence abounds to support the view that the average Yoruba warrior was heavily insured (supernaturally, that is) against accidents or sudden death. In his report on the Egba army in 1861, for instance, Captain Jones observed that "most of the warriors wear



Fig.19.1:A war dress calculated to insulate the wearer from gunshot and injuries



Fig.19.2: Egungun masks used to perform rituals during the war.



'gree-gree' or charms — some of the principal men wear elaborately marked war dresses, studded with cowries and the teeth of wild animals."<sup>20</sup> One of such war dresses was lost by Akintola (a prominent Ibadan warrior) during an attack on Modakeke by the Ekitis, Ijebus and Ife. Tradition holds that the garment actually belonged to Akintola's father and that it was so heavily studded with charms that it could not be conveniently carried by him (i.e. Akintola) during his flight from the battle front. Consequently, he had to entrust it to one of his aides who, in the rush, fell down and lost the garment. Both the garment and the aide's horse were triumphantly carried away as war trophy by the Ifes.<sup>21</sup>

As to the efficacy of the protective charms worn by these soldiers, there is enough evidence to support Fadipe's confident assertion that *oogun* (i.e. charms) often secured invulnerability successfully.<sup>22</sup> This success story is well exemplified by the career of Ajayi Osungbekun, the *Balogun* of Ibadan who succeeded *Balogun* Ajayi Ogboriefon. *Balogun* Ajayi Osungbekun was one of those warriors who had become so invincible in battle that, to get them killed, their assailants invariably had to adopt means other than fire arms. Whilst at Ikirun, the *Balogun* reportedly "gave himself up to a reckless life of wantonness and cruelty."<sup>23</sup> All efforts made by the war chiefs to call their leader to order proved abortive. In fact, the *Balogun* remained unrepentant in his recklessness even after the army had returned home in 1893. Consequently, the Ibadans resolved to reject him as their leader. The main charges against him were his great indulgence in liquor, and failure to lead them to victory as a *Balogun*. As it turned out, it was the *Balogun*'s children who had the unpleasant duty of getting rid of their father. One tradition says that the *Balogun* took the fatal cup, having been persuaded to do so by his sons. Another version of the story maintains that the *Balogun* was attacked by his sons while heavily drunk. The sons reportedly fired shots at him but to no avail. Although the shots threw him off his seat, he was said to have simply muttered, "Who is throwing stones at me?" There and then his sons had recourse to clubs with which he was clubbed to death. According to Johnson, "warriors like him with system fortified against bullets can hardly be hurt by a musket."<sup>24</sup>

Apart from rendering bullets harmless, charms could also be used to render the enemy powerless and inoperative. It was this kind of charm that Ajayi Ogboriefon used to effectively overpower six Ekiti warriors who attempted to assassinate *Owa* Famodun I of Igbajo in his palace during the Kiriji War. Having smuggled the *Owa* out of the palace into safety, Ogboriefon single-handedly confronted the six Ekiti soldiers. One after the other, he lured four of them into a big magical circle which he had drawn on the floor of the palace with a piece of white chalk. As each soldier landed in the circle, he was automatically glued down and began fighting hard to free himself "as if tied with a rope."<sup>25</sup>

Witchcraft also had a significant role to play in Yoruba warfare. Witchcraft is a form of primordial science which 'enables witches to identify herbs suitable both for killing and for healing. The witches (i.e. *awon iya mi osoronga* or *iya nla*) possess the secret of the knowledge of vital force (*ase*). Many witches accompanied their soldier husbands to the war front to be of assistance to the latter in their war efforts. The supportive role of witches in warfare has been vividly depicted in some of the scenes in Wale Ogunyemi's historical play, *Kiriji*.

Tradition has it that an old woman (who happened to be a witch) was rough-handled

by a servant (*Iranse*) of the local Resident (*Ajele*) at Imesi market. The irate old woman (named *Iyami* in the play) resolved to avenge her ill-treatment, using her supernatural power. Shortly afterwards, the *Ajele* was murdered by Fabunmi while the offending *Iranse* was seriously wounded.

Later, after the formal declaration of war, the aggrieved old woman, *Iyami* joined two other patriotic *Iyamis* in offering supernatural assistance to the Ekiti warriors. In so far as the aggrieved *Iyami* was concerned, the approaching war was going to offer her a welcome opportunity to punish the Ibadan for the ill-treatment she suffered at the hands of their *Ajele*. Accordingly, she and her other two colleagues proceeded to the battle front to be of help to the Ekitis. In one of the episodes during the war, the Ibadan opened fire on the Ekitis as the latter were singing and dancing in their camp. It was a surprise attack which would have spelt doom for the unsuspecting Ekiti warriors. But, because the *Iyamis* had supernaturally shielded the Ekitis from their enemies, the bullets had no effects on them. In response, the Ekitis quickly took positions and fired back, forcing the Ibadan to retreat.

### **The Christian Dimension**

It is significant to note that the appeal to the supernatural means of fighting in battle was not restricted to traditional African charms, amulets and other magical means alone. The appeal was equally evident among Christians involved in some of the battles.

In the Ijaye War for instance, it was evidenced that missionaries on both sides of the conflict saw the war as an event in which God had an interest at stake. They therefore directed their prayer efforts towards the achievement of victory for their respective camps in the conflict.<sup>26</sup> Thus, David Hinderer identified himself with the Ibadan cause, maintaining that "as long as Ilorin stands as a Mohammedan power in this country, it is by no means to be wished that Ibadan's war powers should diminish or the Yoruba country would be overrun with Mohammedanism and Christian mission be at an end."<sup>27</sup>

Henry Townsend, on the other hand, was actively involved in the war on the side of the Egba where he earned for himself the reputation of being "the architect of Egba policy."<sup>27</sup> In his own opinion, the Egba power represented progress and advancing civilisation. It was therefore in the best interest of his mission for the Egba to be victorious, otherwise, "our cause or rather that of God would suffer at least for a time immensely."<sup>28</sup>

From the foregoing it is obvious that the missionaries were keenly desirous of achieving victory for their respective sides. To this end, they and their Christian converts had to recourse to regular prayers and church services in the belief that God would supernaturally assist them in battle. Thus, the Abeokuta Christian soldiers led by John Okenla (a prominent Anglican convert) encamped at Olokemeji. There, the missionaries went in turn to conduct Sunday services. William Allen, the African Catechist under Henry Townsend at Ake was delighted and greatly encouraged to see that these services were much sought after, even by pagan soldiers. Allen's observation concerning the Christian soldiers was quite revealing of the level of faith they reposed in the efficacy of prayer. According to him, "the converts showed themselves that they were enlightened by the word of God. They put no confidence on charms as do the heathen. The heathen equipped themselves with charms from the waist to the neck, but the converts had on the plain dress. For their trust was on the Almighty."<sup>29</sup>

Another incident occurred in 1863 which further demonstrated the Christians' great reliance on the efficacy of prayer. At the approach of an invading Dahomean army, the British Governor in Lagos advised missionaries at Abeokuta to flee the town. This advice was firmly turned down by the missionaries. Instead of deserting their converts, they prayed to God for protection. As it turned out, the invading forces suddenly withdrew. Naturally and quite predictably, the missionaries saw in this withdrawal a miraculous reply to their prayers.<sup>30</sup>

Christian soldiers evidently reposed considerable trust in the supernatural capacity of certain emblems to achieve victory for them in battle. We have already noted the fact that Yoruba armies invariably carried along with them *war standards* which were a continual source of encouragement to the soldiers. The functional value of the war standard had its parallel in the role of the Ark of the Covenant among the Israelites in Old Testament times. As a symbolic representation of Yahweh's presence, the Ark was carried to the battle front on one occasion in the hope that it would help to turn the table against the Philistines who had already won an initial victory. It was the sincere belief of the Israelites that "when it (i.e. the Ark) cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies."<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, when the Ark arrived at the battle front, it gave a big boost to the sagging morale of the Israelites whilst at the same time, it struck great fear into the hearts of the Philistines. Although the Israelites lost woefully in this battle (they lost so many men and the Ark itself), the point still remains that they and their neighbours (including the Philistines) continued to believe very strongly in the supernatural powers of the Ark.

In like manner, soldiers on both sides of the Ijaye War strongly believed in the "charm" of the White missionaries as a source of strength and mysterious power. For instance, in May 1861, the Ibadan hurriedly engaged the Egbas in battle in the hope that victory is likely before the arrival of Captain Jones who was already on his way to the war camp. According to Jones' report, "It was hoped by the Ibadans some good would result before the 'fetish' or charm of the white man's presence could operate against them."<sup>32</sup>

This curious belief in the charm of the white man's presence was again manifested among the Egba on Monday, 17 March, 1861. On that day, Lieutenant Dolben, an officer of HMS Prometheus had cause to leave the war camp, taking along with him Rev. Adolphus Mann. Immediately, the news got to Ijaye that "the Ijaye White man (i.e. Mann) had gone" the Egba started fleeing from the battle front in the belief that Rev. Mann's departure was a bad omen. Consequently, Ijaye fell and was burnt down by the invading Ibadan forces.

Some ten years earlier, a similar demonstration of faith in the White man's presence took place among the Egbas in Abeokuta. It was during the first Dahomean invasion of Abeokuta in March 1851. In spite of the missionaries' appeal for adequate preparations, the Egba chose to relax since, according to them, they had the God of the White man on their side. As it turned out, apparently through some mysterious divine intervention, the invading Amazons were persuaded to change their original battle plans. In so doing, they unwittingly betrayed themselves into the hands of the Egba who



detected that they were not men but women in disguise! Eventually, they were forced to retreat.

### **Breech-loading Rifles and the Kiriji War**

We have already noted the fact that the Kiriji War ended in a stalemate. A careful study of the run of events before the stalemate may be helpful in determining the relative contribution of supernatural power towards the combatants' war efforts.

Before the 1880s the war between Ibadan and the confederate forces was, by and large, a ding-dong affair. This was probably because both parties were equally matched in so far as military might was concerned. It might be expected also that the two sides were adequately equipped with a similar assortment of charms, amulets and other magical paraphernalia of war.

According to S.A. Akintoye, however, the turning point in the war occurred in 1880 when the Ekitiparapo Society in Lagos imported through Benin, improved varieties of the Dane guns with large muzzles. These were followed later with Sneider's, Martini Henri, Manser, Winchester and Remington rifles. These rifles were breech-loaders which had a very long range and could be fired more rapidly. Because of their rifled barrels, they were far more accurate than the traditional Dane guns.

It was quite evident that the use of these rifles immeasurably increased the superiority of the Confederates over the Ibadan force. Reports indicate that men and women within the Ibadan camp were shot dead from a great distance. Moreover, some were mortally wounded while others got crippled for life. In a battle fought on the 18 May, 1881, Chief Akintola of Ibadan was shot through the leg as he sat on horseback. It is recorded that the same bullet which hit him also killed his horse and a page standing by.<sup>34</sup>

Obviously, the prevailing balance of power had begun to tilt in favour of the Confederates who had the exclusive privilege of possessing sophisticated weapons. The sudden turn in the fortunes of Ibadan warriors at the time has been vividly described in one of the scenes in Wale Ogunyemi's *Kiriji*. In a rather pathetic tone, *Alore* reported events at the war front to Latosa sometimes in 1884 thus:

Our camps are almost in ruins, The Ekiti boys shoot mighty guns at us. Mighty guns! You need to hear their murderous sound, elders of our land. It is the sound of ten elephants roaring at the same time KIII – RII – JIII – KIII – RII – JIII!... and ten tents are destroyed just like that.... I am sent to tell you this, my General, for we are powerless... We fought like brave men, but power surpasses power.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, the Ibadans must have fought like brave men (and they truly were). But as the messenger humbly admitted, "power surpasses power." The harsh reality of the situation at the time was that the Ibadans (with all their Dane guns and supernatural armour) were simply no match for the sophisticated rifle guns of the Ekitis. This would seem to confirm Fadipe's observation concerning the limitation of charms and amulets as weapons of war. In his view, certain charms could secure invulnerability from gun shot but "there is not the same confidence as regard breech-loading rifles as there is in dealing with the muzzle-loading Dane guns."<sup>36</sup> This viewpoint probably may, or may



not have occurred to the Ibadans at that time. One thing is certain however, namely, that following their bitter experience in the face of devastating gun fire, the Ibadans strongly desired to procure their own rifle guns in order to match the military strength of their enemies.

Unfortunately, the continued closure of the Ijebu and Egba roads constituted a formidable obstacle on the way of the Ibadans as they struggled to improve their military position.<sup>37</sup> In the meantime, they approached the *Alaafin* to solicit his help in arranging a peace settlement. The latter responded by sending a few Oyo soldiers and an *Ifa* priest, ostensibly to make charms for Ibadan's success. But the *Ifa* priest was later accused of making charms which were detrimental to the Ibadan cause.

It may not be easy to prove the allegation brought against the *Alaafin's Ifa* priest. But one can reasonably conclude that in spite of his efforts and the heavy amount of charms and amulets in use among the Ibadan soldiers, the Confederate forces continued to achieve victory after victory. Be that as it may, it must have dawned on the Ibadan leadership that what needed to be reinforced was not their collection of charms and amulets or any other form of supernatural power. Rather, it was their outdated guns that had to be replaced with the latest in firearms and ammunition.

By the mid 1880s the much desired balance of power had been achieved with the procurement of some rifles by the Ibadans who quickly learnt how to operate them. Having realised that their enemies were now armed with rifles, the Ekitis could no longer approach the Ibadan camp to shoot into it with impunity and to offer battle. Consequently, as Johnson points out, very few battles were fought during the years 1885 and 1886. In other words, the war had by then reached a stalemate.

## Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt has been made to identify and discuss the various manifestations of the appeal to the supernatural in Yoruba warfare. We have noted the Yoruba's efforts to seek clear-cut clearance from the oracle before embarking on any military campaign. We have observed the diligence with which ritual offerings were made to propitiate the god of war whilst Christian soldiers engaged in fervent prayers to God for deliverance and victory. The Yoruba's appeal to the supernatural was also strongly manifested in their use of charms and amulets for achieving invincibility at the battle front.

In the two major wars cited (Ijaye and Kiriji), we found that explanation for success or failure in battle was invariably sought and supposedly found in the realm of the supernatural. The Kiriji experience however revealed that this mode of explanation could sometimes prove unreliable. It will be recalled that the use of breech-loading rifles initially gave the Confederate forces an edge over the Ibadan army. That edge was immediately removed when the Ibadan finally succeeded in procuring their own sophisticated weapons. In this way, both parties became equally matched in military strength and a stalemate resulted. The pertinent question one is inclined to ask is: why did all the charms and amulets used by the soldiers on both sides fail to render the breech-loaders ineffective? Whereas those charms proved capable of rendering their

users invincible against the muzzle-loading Dane guns produced locally, they obviously had no answer to the devastating effects of gun fire produced by breeching-loading rifles.

One would not pretend to have an absolutely satisfactory explanation for this poser. Nonetheless, with the benefit of hind-sight, one could suggest that those charms proved ineffective because their makers lacked the requisite basic knowledge of, and familiarity with technology that produced the newly imported breech-loaders. It is partly for this same reason that the 19th century warriors could not effectively stop the White man from achieving the military conquest of the Yoruba country and the subsequent establishment of British colonial rule.

## Notes and References

1. *Daily Times*, Tuesday, June 17, 1986 p.1.
2. See, for instance "Juju Men Back Obasanjo". *Sunday Concord*, June 29, 1986, p.1; "Herbalists set for action on South Africa." *Nigerian Tribune*, Saturday, 12th July, 1986, p. 16.
3. Adetona Ade, "African medicine can bring down Botha" *Daily Sketch*, Tuesday, July 29, 1986, P. 2, Nma Muhammed Jiya, "Juju men should crush apartheid right away." *Sunday Concord*, August 10, 1986.
4. Olatunji Dare, "The Juju Option in South Africa" *The Guardian*, Tuesday, July 29, 1986, p.9.
5. See "Black Power" *Sunday Sketch*, June 22, 1986 p.7.
6. Fagbemi Kunle, "Obasanjo's invisible war," *Sunday Punch* July 6, 1986, p.12.
7. Uche Ensi, "Juju don't win war" *The Guardian*, Tuesday, September 2, 1986, p.11.
8. Smith R.S, *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-Colonial West Africa*, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1976, p. 49.
9. Fadipe N.A., *The Sociology of the Yorubas*, Ibadan University Press, 1970, p. 240.
10. Johnson Samuel, *The History of the Yorubas*, Lagos, C.S.S. Bookshops, 1976, p. 152. See also Akinlolu Aje, "Decapitated head ate up Alaafin's meal(1)" *Sunday Tribune* 18th May, 1986, p.13.
11. For this purpose he had a special ritual stool presently in the custody of Chief J.A. Ayorinde, See also Smith R.S., *Warfare*, p.49.
12. Akintoye S.A. *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840–1893*, London, Longman, 1971, p.93.
13. Ibid. See f.n. 57. The two versions of this tradition are easily reconcilable. If indeed Aduloju had sworn an oath of friendship with Ibadan (as indicated in the

first version), it is then plausible that the oracle's prediction (as in the second version) must have provided him with a welcome excuse for not allying with the enemies of his friend. Apart from being treacherous and unethical, such a move on his part was obviously unnecessary since the war was bound to end in a stalemate anyway.

14. Johnson S, *op. cit.*, pp. 504 & 636.
15. Chief Popoola is the incumbent Araba of Modakeke. He served as *Babalowo* in some of the Yoruba wars of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. His father Omoloruko fought during the Kiriji War.
16. Johnson S, *op. cit.*, p. 136.
17. Johnson S, *op. cit.*, pp. 136–137.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 426–427
19. Unife Africana: British Parliamentary Papers Vol. 63 (Nigeria) "Report of Mr. Higgins & Mr. Oliver Smith." p. 575.
20. Ajayi & Smith, *Yoruba Warfare*, p. 134.
21. Johnson S., *op. cit.*, p. 506.
22. Fadipe N.A. *op. cit.*, p. 296–297.
23. Johnson S *op. cit.*, pp. 605.
24. *Ibid.* pp. 631–633.
25. Ogunyemi Wale, *Kiriji*. Lagos, African Universities Press, 1976, p. 38.
26. For a detailed analysis of the role of Christians in the conflict see W. Olasehinde Ajayi, "Christian Involvement in the Ijaye War." *The Bulletin of the Society for African Church History*, Vol. II, No. 3, 1967, pp. 224–238.
27. C.M.S. Archives CA.2/049 Hinderer to Venn 24. 9. 1860; quoted in W.O. Ajayi, *op. cit.*, p. 230; Ajayi & Smith *op. cit.* p. 60.
28. *Ibid.*
29. C.M.S. Proceedings 1861, p. 45; W.O. Ajayi, *op. cit.* p. 232.
30. Ajayi & Smith, *Yoruba Warfare*, p. 116. Interestingly, the Dahomean invasion on this occasion was undertaken by Glele in the superstitious belief that the earthquake that shook Accra on 19th July, 1862 was no doubt the grumbling of his father in the invisible world. To appease his supposedly angry father therefore, he felt compelled to shed the blood of the Egba. Hence the abortive expedition.
31. I Samuel 4:3.
32. See "Captain Jones's Report on the Egba Army in 1861" in Ajayi & Smith, *Yoruba Warfare*, p. 130.

33. Akintoye, S.A. *Revolution and Power Politics* p. 118.
34. Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 459–460.
35. Ogunyemi Wale, *Kiriji*, p. 56.
36. Fadipe N.A, *op. cit.*, p. 296.
37. Akintoye S.A. *op. cit.*, pp. 160–161



## Chapter Twenty

# Systems of Communication in Yoruba Wars

Tunde Olowookere and  
Gbenga Fagborun

Whatever people do when they come together, whether play, fight or make love, they talk. We live in a world of words. We talk to our friends, our associates, our wives and husbands, our lovers, our teachers, our parents and even our opponents when we engage in arguments. Language is the medium with which human beings communicate. Among other developments in human existence is the desire to communicate with people whether near or far who understand our language and culture. To overcome such problems of communication with people who live afar, societies develop all sorts of techniques including beating of drums, whistling, writing etc. Writing, for instance, permits a society to record permanently its history, its poetry, its technology and to send messages from one place to the other.

The Yoruba did not develop the art of writing<sup>1</sup> as some other nations, but that did not preclude them from sending messages from one place to the other. In this chapter, we will discuss Yoruba systems of communication during periods of war. We shall be concerned with such systems of communication in Yoruba as *Aroko*,<sup>2</sup> battle cries,<sup>3</sup> drumming, and praise poetry.<sup>4</sup> Finally we shall draw vivid examples from the mode of settling the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War.

*Aroko* is a diplomatic system of communication which involves the transmission of physical objects from one person or group of persons to the other so as to convey a particular message. The objects so exhibited have symbolic meanings within the cultural unit. Outside that cultural unit, they may sound meaningless.

Even though *Aroko* is at present fast disappearing from our culture, it was quite effective in Yorubaland many centuries ago. The effective use of *Aroko* symbol did not elude the attention of foreigners. Major Reeve Tucker, the commissioner of the north-eastern district comprising Ijesa and Ekiti<sup>5</sup> (between November 1899 to December 1912) described it as a 'code' of correspondence used by the Ijesa and Ekiti. In his appendix II, while attempting to trace the origin of *Aroko*, Archdeacon Olumide Lucas<sup>6</sup> identifies what he calls local specimens of *Aroko* among the Ijebu made up of cowries of various designs, combinations and arrangements and says:

Having lost the knowledge of Egyptian hieroglyphics, the Yorubas invented their own hieroglyphics. These are known as *Aroko*. The significance of the symbols is generally understood but variation and local peculiarities obviate the evolution of a national standard.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, *Aroko* was considered by Lucas as a replica of the Egyptian hieroglyphic, a system of pictographic script. While hieroglyphic is useful for sending messages and for keeping records, *Aroko* is a symbolic device for sending diplomatic

messages either for information, warning, caution, peace or war and varied messages at personal, intra-community and inter-community levels. Unlike the Egyptian pictographic script which is designed for all and sundry; *Aroko's* interpretation is restricted to those who understand the culture and the meaning attached to the materials used.

In his illuminating study, Olomola<sup>8</sup> identified two types of *Aroko* namely: the verbal *Aroko*<sup>9</sup> and the artifactual *Aroko*. The verbal *Aroko* he says:

Consists of verbal messages usually couched in special aphorisms or veiled languages common among the Yoruba. Such aphorisms conveyed specific meanings and instructions might or might not be directly related to the literal meanings of the words actually used. For instance to say *Opa se* (the stake is broken) *Opo ye* (the pillar has fallen down) *ile pada* (there has been a change of house) was an aphorism conveying the news of the death of a reigning *Oba* to the authorities.

Olomola's verbal *Aroko* are in fact idioms<sup>10</sup> used not only by court officials but by all those who are versed in the use of Yoruba language. It does not require any diplomacy or any initiation as artifactual *Aroko* demand. Expressions such as those identified as *Aroko Ohun* (verbal *Aroko*) are numerous in Yoruba language such as:

- (a) *Oba reye* (the king has shed wings)
- (b) *juba ehoro* (to pay homage to the hare)
- (c) *fi idodo kogbo* (to hang the navel in the bush)
- (d) *ta teru nipaa* (to kick the white cloth)

These expressions have specific interpretations and cannot be given any local or sectional interpretation. Symbolic *Aroko* in Yoruba like the silent trade, is a form of communication that does not involve oral conversation.

Etymologically, the term *Aroko* is a code which can be considered as a uniform thought about the world around a certain society and the use they make out of it. It has been conventionalised and the interpretation thereof is as agreed on and never changing. It involves joint understanding and acceptance by the users – namely the sender and the receiver – to convey specific information.

As has been rightly observed by Olomola, however, there is no pan – Yoruba standard form of *Aroko*. Even then, there are certain symbolic objects which cut across the Yoruba community like the *aje* 'tinder' used by hunters and white colour signifying peace. There are local variations but certain common features run through the series. Guild members such as the hunters and the *Ogboni* cult have standard *Aroko*. Although many of the important symbols might convey identical meanings and have many similar interpretations in many courts, we have endeavoured to concentrate on peace and war symbols used for communication among the hunters who were fighting men and the *Ogboni* cult whose position in Yoruba traditional society cannot be undermined. We shall conclude by considering the traditional *Aroko* and the mode of settling the internal war in Yorubaland in the 19th century.

The *Esq's* (guards) of the Olukoyi lineage specialized in wars and they formed the main bulk of the fighting force in Oyo – Yoruba traditional setting. Other categories of people who participated in wars included volunteers, hunters and traditional herbalists who went to the war-front because of the power of medicine that they possessed. The other category of people who went to war were the drummers and fluters

here referred to as para-militias.<sup>12</sup> The *alore*,<sup>13</sup> the drummers and bugle players will form our major concern as they send non-verbal messages to the militias. The hunters were usually called upon in times of war and efforts will be concentrated first on communications that would not involve oral conversation but rather on symbolic objects that convey the same type of interpretation throughout the length and breath of the Yoruba country. Secondly, we shall later discuss other systems of communication, blowing of bugle and praise poetry.

In the following discussion, we first focus on the role of the emissary<sup>14</sup> (whom Olomola calls *Iko*) through whom *Aroko* is sent, the interpretation of each material making up the *Aroko* as it relates to war and peace, the use of *Aroko* message during Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War and the eventual settlement of the war.

For *Aroko* to be viable, the integrity of the emissary must be unquestionable to avert the unhappy consequences of distortion of the components of *Aroko* which might eventually lead to wrong interpretation. For among the many causes of feuds among the Yoruba which may later develop to war were such issues as seducing of another man's wife, trespassing, assault, chieftaincy rivalry, unconstitutional behaviour and destruction of territorial areas of other communities.<sup>15</sup>

Among hunters, exchange of war *Aroko* might arise as a result of trespass arising from illegal use of *Ojube*.<sup>16</sup> *Ojube* was a narrow path through which hunters passed during a hunting expedition. Preparation of *Ojube* was personal to each hunter and any other hunter who either by accident or design used another hunter's *Ojube* has trespassed. If, a hunter met another hunter in his *Ojube*, a serious challenge is launched. If the trespasser apologised claiming ignorance, he would be warned and called upon to desist from using the *Ojube*. If he persisted using the *Ojube* illegally, the legitimate owner of the *Ojube* then sent an *Aroko* consisting of the following items.<sup>17</sup>

- aje* (tinder for loading gun)
- etu* (gunpowder)
- ewe esisi* (stinging leaf *Tragia Euphorbiaceae*)
- and a three lobed kolanut.

These symbolic items were tied together with black and white thread signifying warning. The items were interpreted as follows: *aje* (tinder for loading gun) was an indication that the sender of *Aroko* was a hunter. Tinder could be used as *Aroko* without other materials in the following ways: If a hunter erroneously crossed another *Ojube*, the former, could merely put tinder on a forked stick to indicate that a hunter had crossed the *Ojube*. Furthermore, if a hunter crossed another man's farm during the course of an expedition, he could put tinder on a forked stick by the edge of the farm where the owner of the farm would see it. Tinder could be regarded as a solidarity or unity mark among hunters. Gunpowder is also a solidarity or unity mark among hunters. Gunpowder signifies fire while *esisi* (stinging leaf) indicates that he intends to fight quickly. The three lobed kolanut means that if within three days appropriate propitiation was not received, the receiver should expect trouble.

The recipient could do one or two things. He could either contact an elderly member of the hunter's guild who would intervene by sending a cob of maize stripped of corn tied with white thread. This signified that he sued for peace or the recipient on his part could collect the following items and parcel them to the challenger:



*Odundun* (*Kalanchoe crossulaceae*, a soft medicine herb).

*Ori* (shea butter)

*Ikori Ogede weere* (top of banana fruit)

*Ewe iku poro*

*Aje* (tinder)

Apart from *aje* (tinder) which we have explained as a mark of solidarity among hunters, all the other items are harmless and are propitiation symbols. *Odundun* leaf is an erect succulent shrub having clusters of pink, four petalled flowers. The leaves could be rubbed on or tied on the head as a cure for small-pox and headache. The juice is used for ear-ache or ophthalmia. Just as *Odundun* was used for the cure of such deadly and dreadful disease, in like manner would *odundun* "soften the heart" of the aggrieved. Shea butter softens hard substances and therefore the offender was apologising to the aggrieved to "soften his mind" and give room for amicable settlement. We eat banana (*Musa sapientum*) with little effort because it is soft. In like manner banana was meant to mollify or soften the heart of the aggrieved. '*Ewe iku poro*' as the name implies would put a final settlement to the issue'. If, however, the recipient was itching for a fight, the following symbolic war items would be wrapped in dry leaves and sent to the challenger.

*Ota* (bullet)

*Idaro* (Iron dross)

*Ekuda obe* (broken knife)

*Ota wewe ori Sango* (small granite on Sango)

In loading a gun, apart from *aje* which protects the other components from falling off, bullet is usually put on top of the other components. Its place in war *Aroko* is to indicate that anywhere the opponent might go, he is within reach just as the bullet can go far when a gun is fired. Iron dross signifies that he is ready to render the opponent useless just as the iron dross is good for nothing. Just as the broken knife has outlived its usefulness, in the same manner the opponent was going to be rendered useless. Small granite on Sango (the god of thunder) is to show that the god of thunder had been involved in the contest. Thus, the challenger would be punished and destroyed by the god of thunder. When two hunters have gone thus far in the exchange of *Aroko* as described above, the battle line has already been drawn and there was no looking back.

## The Ogboni Cult

The members of the Ogboni cult have a distinct way of communicating with fellow cult members either by the way they exchange greetings which non-members would not understand or by the use of signs which are completely unknown to the uninitiated. There are symbolic objects such as '*abo edan* and *ako edan*' which Ogboni cult members send to communicate particular information to one another. Apart from *Edan* the following symbols sent to any offender signifies trouble:

*esisi* (stinging leaf)

*Okuta wewe meje* (seven pebbles)

*Ewe ina* (fire leaf)

*Ege awẹ obi* (fractional part of a lobe of kola nut)

In addition to the usual meaning attached to *esisi* (stinging leaf) that the war would be



fought as early as possible, there is also the implication that the fight would also involve the use of charms. *Ewe ina* is to show that the sender would "burn" and wage the war from all fronts in which case it would lead to total annihilation. The seven pebbles indicates that the witches have been employed to use all their powers to fight the one to whom the *Aroko* was sent. The inclusion of the fractional part of a lobe of kolanut signifies that the offence has been investigated and found to be deliberate and would, therefore, not go unpunished. If the recipient wanted amicable settlement, all he would do is to send

*Osun* (camwood)  
*Ose dudu* (black soap)  
*Obi Ifin* (White kolanut); and  
*Ewe odundun* (kolancho)

These are all harmless symbolic materials which symbolise peace. Camwood is a propitiation object symbolising patience. Black soap is intended to wash whatever stain or ill-feeling the offence might have caused. The whiteness of the kolanut signifies peace while kolanut itself was a symbol of solidarity.

If on the other hand the recipient is prepared to fight back he in turn would despatch the following items tied with black thread:

*Kainkain* (black ant)  
*Igi egun* (thorny tree)  
*Ata meta* (three pepper fruits)  
*Werepe* (*mucuna flagellipes*)  
*Yangi ori Esu* (brown iron stone ballast)

These items indicate preparedness for war. The black-ant stings and thorny tree pierce the skin. Pepper does not soothe eyes and its contact with any part of the body is not always pleasant. *Mucuna flagellipes* causes intense irritation. The challenger is thus being told to be prepared to receive "fire for fire". The brown iron stone ballast on *Esu* means that *Esu* had to be impressed to fight on his side.

When a battle-line has been drawn in a Yoruba war, the fighters are not left alone to face the great task. The militias,<sup>18</sup> while fighting do not communicate freely with the 'para-militias' who are to keep watch and be on the look-out always. This is because it is unwise to relate the events and trend of the war while the fighting is in progress. Instead 'para-militias' who send messages to the militias would be at alert, watching if the addressee had gotten the full meaning of his coded message.

When a soldier listens to a talking drum, he has to interpret the accoustic signal in the light of his experience of talking drums. Those who are going to the battle-field for the first time may not be able to decode the message sent to them. The codes may be ambiguous and this might lead the hearer into interpreting the message wrongly. For the sake of this group of people the 'para-militias' might result to singing.

Before the Yoruba advance into an enemy camp for a battle all the necessary war codes and their meanings are usually explained. The war leaders would educate and test the younger militias who have just matured for warfare. They would be taught how a mistake in decoding a signal could be rectified. If a warrior does not understand the message correctly at first, for instance, he could blow his bugle twice or more depending on what they had previously agreed upon. Not only the 'para-militias' send signals; the militias themselves do communicate if the need arises. A lonely militia, for

instance, who needs help could send a signal to a nearby comrade. There is a way of sending for warriors to come and rescue a wounded militia. All had to be learnt before setting out for either offensive or defensive attack.

There is a general belief that no warrior should tamper with a drummer. *Ogun ki i ja ko ko onilu* meaning 'No drummer should be taken as prisoner of war'. This belief serves as an impetus for the drummers to do those things for which history now remembers them.

### **Uses of Musical Instruments as a System of Communication<sup>19</sup>**

The Yoruba usually built walls round their cities to prevent invaders. At the entrance of each settlement was located a 'look-out watchman', *Alore*, who was stationed on the top of a hill or a tree on sentry. If there is a spy, who had come to prepare ground for invaders, the *Alore* would inform the town people using his bugle. He might warn his people about the incoming raiders thus:

*Eni o sun o dide,  
Ero oja para mo.  
Ogun wolu, e dide  
Ero oja e para mo.  
Eso ilu e dide  
Ero oja para mo.*

"He who has slept should rise up  
Market people should take heed  
War has come, arise  
Market people should wake up  
Market people should take heed."

The next point of action is for the town folks to listen to the watchman so as to know the direction of the incoming war. The drummers would join the watchman to relay the message of warning to the people most especially the militias who are always at alert. If the drummers realise that people are not fast enough in their preparation for war, they could manipulate their drums to gear them up to be quick otherwise the town would be captured. A song such as this could be produced by the drummers:

*Afira o see se  
Eni ba jafira  
Lafiraa ja  
Afira o see se*

"Sluggishness could be dangerous  
He who is sluggish  
Stands the risk of being captured  
Sluggishness could be dangerous"

This implies that the warriors should not waste a moment in their preparation because the invaders are fast approaching. If the approaching invaders are perceived to be strong, the watchman, through the drummers would tell the fighting force in his camp that all the necessary precautions must be taken and that competent and most senior warriors must not lag behind to be able to present equal force in a reciprocal proportion. Thus:

*Toguntogun ni n bo*  
*Olori ogun ko gbodo keyin ogun*  
*Toguntogun ni n bo*

They are coming in a warlike mood  
The war leader should not lag behind  
They are coming in a warlike mood.

Some songs are usually produced in the battle-field to aid the warriors. The drummers could start by reminding the warriors of their past performances and achievements; and then urge them to break the record they had laid. Reference could be made to the use of *oriki* (praise poetry) of *Baale Oroowusi* who was described as:

He who makes heaps and sows human beings there  
He collected human heads in demijohn like dry yams

A battle cry like this when heard would spur the praised militia to fight more bravely. Songs could be composed to commend the warriors who were doing what was expected of a gallant soldier. After a successful battle in which an opponent had been subjugated, the drummers could sing a song such as:

*Bee lokunrin i se*  
*Bee lokunrin i se*

That is how a man behaves  
That is how a man behaves

When an offensive attack is launched on a settlement, during day light, the attackers' drummers might sound a note of warning thus:

*Bonile ko*  
*Bonile ko ti o sa o*  
*Ije a digbo luje.*

If the households refuse  
If the households refuse to flee  
We shall contest the race

The answer to this might be:

*Ki ni o fidu agbon se*  
*Awodi oke to wodu agbon koro*  
*Ki ni o fidu agbon se.*

What will he do with coconut shell  
A flying hawk that focuses on a coconut shell  
What will he do with a coconut shell

With this type of exchange of songs it was sure that the warriors were ready to fight.

If the 'para-militias' realise that their people could be overpowered if care was not taken, it is their duty to remind the militias that the glory of a warrior is to win a war. However, the *Yoruba* believe that one of two things befits an *Eso*: either to be victorious or to die fighting. The *Esos* were fearless warriors. However, the *Yorubas* also believe that a real courageous man who wants to tell the story of the war must learn how to fight sensibly. He must know when to stay away and stop fighting and at the same time he

must know when to strike. It was the drummers who would remind them of this by saying.

*Weyin weyin weyin*  
*Akin moja-mosa niyi Akin*  
*Weyin weyin weyin*

Look back, look back, look back  
 Strike when necessary run when necessary  
 is the tact adopted by a warrior  
 Look back, look back, look back.

The warriors might not know the right weapons to use at a point in time. It is the drummers who remind them. For instance, a drummer might tell his warriors to resort to the use of brooms if guns, arrows and bows had failed by singing:

*E wi falejo ko lo*  
*E fi sasara bagbo*  
*E wi falejo ko lo*  
*E fi sadara bagbo*

Tell the strangers (invaders) to flee  
 Put broom in decoction.

This warning for the invaders to quit may resort to unseen powers fighting them if they refused to yield. Many people who have been victims of such decoction have become mentally unstable and in some cases had smallpox all over their body. At times, when the militias have almost been reduced to half, the drummers would invoke spirits and command the grasses and some other non-human element to come to their aid. This could be regarded as a kind of communication between man and spirits.

*Kooko dide*  
*Eruwa dide*  
*Ajagun orun dide*  
*Orisa dide*

Weeds arise  
 Grasses arise  
 Heavenly warriors arise  
 Orisa arise.

To frighten an opponent who had been taken a prisoner of war, a drummer might tell his men

*E seru ba a*  
*Bi o ba mode*

You frighten him  
 If he does not know  
 What you stand for

The victim may be killed instantly when a drummer uses his drum to communicate such song with his militias.

A powerful group of warriors in search of an obstinate and troublesome invader, could be desperate in their venture. The 'para-militias' could aggravate their tempo by telling them that if eventually they were able to catch an invader who had given them so much trouble, he should be killed.



*Bowo ba talaseju*  
*Pipa ni e pa a*  
*Ka rohun jeba lola*

If you grasp the obstinate  
 Kill him

So that we may eat eba with it tomorrow.

Drummers are profoundly proud of their men, especially, when the battle is in their favour. They then resort to singing victorious songs telling their mates and passers-by that nobody could resist their attacks. One of the commonest songs is:

*Afoke afigbo*  
*Ko seni to le duro*  
 Except the hill, except the forest  
 Nobody can stand on our way.

### Settlement of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War

In the 19th century Yorubaland was in turmoil on account of civil wars. The Fulani Jihadists had subdued Ilorin and part of Ekiti/Igbomina and were attempting to subjugate Otun, Ijero and other Ekiti kingdoms. The Ijesa kingdom maintained her independence until the Ibadan came into power after delivering a large portion of the Oyo country from the Fulani yoke. By 1877, the Ekitiparapo Confederacy was formed to fight Ibadan imperialism<sup>21</sup> in a war that dragged on till 1893. In search for peace, the *Alaafin* as one of the leading Yoruba kings, sent his fan to Governor Moloney to help him settle the problem. The sending of the fan is to sue for peace, in the same way that if the weather is hot, the use of a fan cools it. By this symbol, the *Alaafin* was saying that Yorubaland was "hot" and he hoped the Governor would personally intervene to bring about peace. Apart from the verbal message and the *Aroko* of fan sent by the *Alaafin* to Governor Moloney, citizens of other states whose people were seriously affected by the war wrote to the Governor for his personal intervention. As a first step, the Governor ordered an armistice for six months. A white<sup>22</sup> flag was hoisted by Mr. Samuel Johnson on the battle-field during the armistice. The hoisting of the white flag is a form of *Aroko* which signifies peace. After the treaty for settlement had been drawn up the terms were read and explained to all concerned and representatives of interested parties were called upon to put their marks. After the proclamation of Peace was read and interpreted, the bugle was sounded and a salute of seven guns was fired. The *Balogun*, *Seriki* and others came out and shook hands as a sign of friendship. Their hands were joined by the senior commissioner. In accordance with Yoruba traditions, they were called upon to break *kolanut* together.

This discussion has highlighted the non-verbal means of communication among the Yoruba. It touched on connotation attached to colour and the various plants and objects around the Yoruba people. It has shown that white colour signifies peace while black colour signifies aggressive position. Furthermore, the Yoruba world view has been brought into focus by the meaning attached to nature around them. The significant role of the "para-militias", including the *Alore*, the drummers and buglers was noted. This discussion has by no means exhausted the various kinds of war and peace communication systems, but it has dealt only with those of hunters and *Ogboni* and the communication strategy of warriors in the war front. It has also been shown that even with

British involvement in the settling of the war, indigenous ways of settling problems were not completely neglected. The signing of the treaty was a novel and foreign type of *Aroko* which was different from the system of communication with which the Yoruba people were familiar.

## Notes and References

1. Attempts to reduce the Yoruba language to writing was begun by the early Christian missionaries to facilitate their work. See Ajayi Ade, "How Yoruba Was Reduced to Writing" *ODU*, No. 8, 1960.
2. The term *Aroko*, according to Chief Fasogbon through personal interview, is a 'code'. This agrees with Major Reeve Tucker the Commissioner for the North-Eastern District comprising of Ijesa and Ekiti between November 1899 and December 1912. As at now, no known linguistic explanation can be offered.
3. Most of the battle cries used in this paper were collected in 1981 from the following informants:
  - (a) Alayande, Emmanuel, a traditional talking drummer at Edunabon aged 50. His father played for the militias during the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo war (5/7/81).
  - (b) Bakare Arubiewe of Oke Baale, Osogbo aged 75. He is a night-guard by profession. Interviewed in 1981.
  - (c) Chief Durosaro of Orita Aperin, Ibadan aged 65. Interviewed on 30/1/81.
  - (d) Pa Ogungbile, a renowned hunter from Ogbirigbiri village near Edunabon. Interviewed in 1981.
  - (e) Babatunde Akindiya (now dead) of Balogun's compound, Edunabon an Ijala chanter. Interviewed on 27/9/81.
4. Awe Bolanle 'Notes on Oriki and Warfare in Yorubaland' in 'Wande Abimbola (ed.) *Yoruba Oral Tradition*, Ife 1975.
5. Major Reeve Tucker was a foreigner who was the commissioner of the "North-Eastern District, Lagos Protectorate" Lagos, Annual Reports for the Year 1900–1901, p. 15.
6. Lucas J. Olumide in the *Religion of the Yoruba*, 1948 Appendix II expresses the view that both in religion, language and culture the Yoruba have something in common with the Egyptians and that *Aroko* is a replica of hieroglyphics writing.
7. Evolution of a national standard of *Aroko* has never been achieved. In Ife for instance, a red cloth within a white enclosure is a sign of danger while in Oyo the sheath of beans tied in a leaf convey the same idea. This, however, does not mean

that there is no agreement in the system. *Aje* for instance has been shown to be a solidarity item among the hunters.

8. Isola Olomola, 'An Indigenous Yoruba Sempitic Device' in *ODU* 19, 1979 identified both verbal and artifactual *Aroko*.
9. Verbal *Aroko* according to Isola Olomola are expressions as:  
*opa se* (the stake is broken)  
*opa ye* (the pillar has fallen down)  
*ile pada* (there has been a change of house)
10. What Olomola identified as *aroko ohun* are idioms as in the following:  
  - (a) *Oba reye* meaning the King is having a hair-cut
  - (b) *juba ehoro* meaning to run like the hare
  - (c) *fi idodo kogbo* meaning to sell wares to somebody who cannot pay.
11. The *Esos* were the military men in Oyo-Yoruba. "*Emi omo Eso*" is a proud phrase generally used even to this day by any of the descendants to show their scorn for anything mean or low.
12. People who played significant roles during the war but did not carry guns are here referred to as para-militias. These include the *alore*, drummers, praise singers and bugle players.
13. The role of the *Alore* was to watch the movement of people moving in and out of the town. It is his responsibility to alert the militia in case of a spy or suspect.
14. The term 'emissary' is used here in the same way as Olomola uses *Iko* for the person who runs errands. see Olomola, *ibid*.
15. An unconstitutional behaviour and destruction of territorial areas of other community was committed by *Olowu* when he destroyed Ife villages of Ikoyi, Apomu etc., during the reign of *Alaafin* Abiodun. The *Ooni* had to retaliate by waging war on Owu.
16. To facilitate smooth expedition, hunters prepare narrow paths through which they pass so that animals might not be aware of their movements in the forest.
17. The information on the composition of peace and war *aroko* was provided by Chief Saba, a high Chief at Igbajo. He himself is a hunter.
18. The term militias was used by Johnson in the *History of the Yorubas* for the civilians trained as soldiers but are not part of the regular army.
19. All the chants in this section were obtained from informants in Note 3 above.
20. '*Sasara*' is a poisoned broom dipped into a decoction which had been prepared before hand and carried to the battle field.
21. The full information of the disagreement between Igbajo and Ilesa was supplied

by the *Owa* of Igbajo, *Oba* Isaac Adelani Famodun II whose grand-father Famodun I was on the throne during the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War. *Oba* Famodun I died at Ire where he took refuge when Igbajo was ravaged.

22. See *Lagos West African Correspondence*, February 1887.



## **Chapter Twenty One**

# **Kinesics of Fight or Flight: An Analysis of Ijaye War Songs and Dance<sup>1</sup>**

**Folabo Ajayi**

Although there exists a substantial number of songs and dance styles in contemporary Nigerian society which are easily associated with either a specific war or a people's general warrior tradition,<sup>2</sup> it is not often that such art forms are considered possible tactics of warfare. They are usually dismissed as leisure arts more suited to peacetime ceremonies than to the tragic violence of warfares. With very few exceptions, historical accounts of wars generally overlook the creative efforts of the people during or even after the war event and ignore them as valuable contributions to war records.<sup>3</sup> However, both songs and dances are art forms able to communicate and express verbally and kinesically various other human activities, the war action inclusive.

As communicative art forms, dance and music function at multifarious levels. When associated with war situations, they can be used to celebrate victories, enhance the romance of war and its valour, thus encouraging soldiers to fight with greater commitment in future wars. Apart from celebrations, war dances and songs also function in the training of soldiers where the pulsating vigorous movements of dance, train warriors in physical endurance, movement coordination and exercise both the mind and the muscles.

Dance, a rhythm-based kinesthetic art form, is able to organise the various daily human actions in the coordinated aesthetic unit— the dance. Using rhythm, dance harnesses the inherent energy in human movement action to a sharp concentrated focus where the kinetic energy is then redistributed to various parts of the body with redoubled force in creative patterns. Through this intensity of concentrated energy in body gestures and facial expressions, dance achieves its non-verbalised but high communication quality. When the highly concentrated energy of dance kinetics is employed in the services of a violent situation such as in a war, it is with devastating effects, and the art becomes as deadly as the war itself.

The most crucial and most natural weapon of war is the human body. All other weapons such as swords, guns, rockets and many more, although can be used to cause massive destructions at warfares, are artificial and secondary. They serve as mere aids to the main weapon, that is, the human body. People it is, who fight wars, not weapons. The argument being advanced here is that a soldier with an enfeebled body will render any other weapon useless no matter how sophisticated it may be, for even the most automatic weapon still requires a human operator at one point or the other. A physically fit body presupposes an alert mind – a perfect combination which, to a considerable extent determines the outcome of a war. This is the reason why body exercises

constitute an important aspect of military training all over the world.

Though the art of dance, unlike war, is a non-violent activity, it is nonetheless a very physical and energetic art which makes extensive use of the human body. Like in a warfare, dance relies on the body to make its most effective impact as an expressive and a communicative art. It is within this common perspective, the human body, that this paper examines the dances and accompanying songs as part of the tactics of wars in general, and, specifically in Ijaye War.

### **The Saga of Ijaye War<sup>4</sup>**

The immediate cause of the Ijaye War was the question of succession to the vacant throne of Oyo around 1858. Contrary to the existing tradition which stipulates that the *Aremo* (the *Alaafin*'s first son) should commit suicide on his father's death, the *Alaafin* expressed the wish that his *Aremo* Adelu be the king after him. On his death, his wishes were carried out by the kingmakers. However, Kurunmi, the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo* opposed this review of tradition and refused to acknowledge Adelu as his king. Kurunmi replied with insults, the various peace overtures made to him by the new king and also those made on behalf of Adelu by the leaders of Ibadan which by then had become a powerful satellite and warrior town of Oyo. Eventually, Kurunmi's intransigence led to the famous Ijaye War. Although the initial source of conflict was between Kurunmi of Ijaye and *Alaafin* Adelu of Oyo the actual warfare was fought between Ijaye and Ibadan, the latter fighting on behalf of Oyo. Among the distinguished leaders of Ibadan were *Balogun* Ibikunle and *Basorun* Ogunmola. The Egba came into the war as an ally of Ijaye.

The historical account of Ijaye War (and a few others), given in Rev. Samuel Johnson's book – *The History of the Yoruba* is, in contemporary times, a rare documentation of creative perspectives in Yoruba warfares. The account contains a liberal collection of the dance-songs that were composed about the war while it was still actually in progress. Nine of these songs have been selected to illustrate and analyse the role they played in the escalation and the actual execution of Ijaye War. Below is a sequential arrangement of the songs as they systematically charted the course of the war from the beginning to the end.

### **The Songs<sup>5</sup>**

1. Ijaye: *Atiba ma ti ilo*  
*Duro de Adelu O!*  
(Atiba don't go yet  
wait for your Adelu pray)
2. Kurunmi: *Ata opolo ni ipa,o sun ikaka*  
(Ijaye) *Gbogbo wa ni yio ku bere*  
(A frog is kicked and lies on its back,  
We shall all die by myriads.)
3. Ijaye: *L'aiye Onalu li a ro okan le okan*  
*L'aiye Kurunmi lia ro'gba ro'gba*  
*L'aiye Adelu in ipele di itele idi*

(In Onalu's time we used changes of dress, In Kurunmi's time we used cloths of the finest weaving.  
In Adelu's time our best becomes our everyday's).

4. Ibadan soldiers: *A foke a fi igbo*  
*Ko s'eni tole duro*

(But the hills, but the woods  
There is none to withstand us).

5. Ijaye soldiers: *Ija orogun koro*  
*Orogun koro*  
(Bitter is the quarrel of rivals, the rivals.)

6. Ibadan: *Ajiya nikan l'o lo'gun*  
*Iwi l'a ko gbodo wi*  
(T'was Ajiya who simply routed the foe, But we must not say its so.)

7. Ibadan: *Kanakana Ajibade*  
*Ohan Ohan ni ndun.*  
*A ri Egba lokankan a se bi ogun ni*  
*Ija suke suke ni ja Egba*  
*Ija lile lile n'ja Oyo.*  
(The crows of Ajibade  
*Ohan! Ohan!* they cry,  
Egba at a distance appear like men  
Nerveless and feeble is the Egba fight.  
Strenuous and brave is the Ibadan fight).

8. Ijaye: *Onigbeja li o fo'ogun*  
*Iwi l'a gbodo wi.*  
(T'was our allies caused our rout,  
But we must not say its so.)

9. Ibadan: *Odunbudere Okunrin*  
*A to fi ise ogun ran.*  
(A mighty man (i.e. *Balogun* Ibikunle)  
fit to be entrusted with the onus of war).

### **The Dance Kinetics to the Songs**

Apart from stating that people actually danced to the tunes Johnson did not give a description of any of the dance styles. However, the strains of the songs and accompanying dances have survived into contemporary times. They are performed especially during civil riots, where although, the verbal content of the songs may be reworded to reflect the current source of conflict, the original musical composition is retained. The retention of the old tunes infers that the dance movements will not have

been substantially altered, because, as Kwabena Nketia rightly argues, there is a close interrelationship between the African dance and music. He points out that the rhythmic lines of music are articulated in dance movements, and concludes that they 'provide a background for dramatic communication and the enactment of belief or historical episodes.'\* The Ijaye War dance-songs strongly justifies this theory; the dance styles strive to express and reinforce what the songs communicate.

The first three songs give, from the Ijaye side, the background to the impending crisis. Ostensibly the aggrieved party, Ijaye dominates the scene as it presents its own case with righteous indignation. Movements to Kurunmi's song are short and abrupt, indicating his impatience with the Ibadan people when reports reach him that they are finally ready to go to war. The combat songs of both Ijaye and Ibadan (songs 4 & 5) are performed with fast vigorous movements including running motions. Being at the scene of combat, various fighting tactics are carried out. Songs 6 & 7 report on the progress of the war, the Ijaye and their allies are loosing grounds while the Ibadan are gaining the upper hand. The 7th song which ridicules the fighting tactics of the Egba is performed with quick and sharp thrusts of the head from below the neck. Simultaneously, the shoulders are engaged in quick, jerky spasms while the hands hang loosely by the sides. These movements depict a coward too frightened to effect decisive actions at crucial moments. The last two songs give the final verdict of the war, the Ijaye have conceded victory to the Ibadan. Their song is a song of despair which is performed solemnly with very little body movements to express their subdued spirits. By contrast, Ibadan's song of victory (song 9) is performed with large expansive and forceful movements proclaiming their joy and superiority over the Ijaye people.

## **Analysis of the Role of the Dance-Songs in the War:**

**Ijaye Songs No.1-3:** At the outbreak of hostilities, the Ijaye side seemed to have the monopoly of provocative songs and dances. The first song-movement is a thinly disguised allusion to the 'yet to be committed suicide' of King Adelu. It is a direct challenge to the king's authority in the hope that it will provoke him into a fit of violence. In addition, the fact that a royal affair is allowed to degenerate into a topic of fun and ridicule among ordinary citizens is an unmistakable signal that Kurunmi has not got the slightest intention of acknowledging the *Alaafin* as his sovereign. The desired effect of the songs seem to have been realised when the Ibadan/Oyo group terminates peace overture to Kurunmi and starts to prepare for war. It has been eventually realised that only the destructive finality of an armed conflict can stop any further insults to the *Alaafin* and restore his bruised dignity. The news of war preparations in the Ibadan camp against him further increases Kurunmi's contempt for the Ibadan/Oyo cause and the new challenge. Not content with describing how he will "chain that imp of Ogunmola" to a post, he digs into his bag of creative arsenals and composes songs. The abrupt movements which indicate his contempt for death as verbalised in the song, are calculated to demoralise the efforts of the younger and relatively inexperienced Ibadan warriors. The third song heightens the challenge being thrown to the Oyo/Ibadan group. It is a biting but subtle satire on Adelu's leadership. While Kurunmi also known as Onalu, brings prosperity to his people, Adelu's time causes dire austerity which forces people to wear their best clothes everyday because they cannot afford to have



a change of clothes.

The Ijaye songs are meant to goad the Ibadan/Oyo people into a fight, at the same time, they are used to justify the position of Kurunmi. The more annoying and insulting the song/gestures are; the more Kurunmi and his people become convinced of the justification of their action and the more courage they derive from it. Adelu had been branded an ineffective ruler; compared with the forthright leadership of Kurunmi, the situation then becomes a simple matter of good triumphing over evil. This is a strong psychological weapon.

**Ibadan Songs (No. 6-8):** Midway through the war however, there is a decisive reversal of fortunes as Ijaye sustains heavy losses and victory looks certain for Ibadan. The latter now dominates in composing derisive songs to taunt the Ijaye and especially the Egba and their poor fighting tactics. Taunting songs after a defeat are more crushing than if they had come before; it is like rubbing salt into an open wound. The seventh song in particular ridicules the succour (i.e. the Egba) the Ijaye relied upon to help them win the war. Even if initially, the Ijaye, out of politeness have refused to admit the obvious incompetence and the blunders of the Egba, that song-dance spells it out clearly for them. The fact is now forced into their consciousness but with devastating results on their (Ijaye) performances in what remained of the war. It is a very effective weapon created by the Ibadan, for it completely demoralised the Ijaye.

**Defeat and Victory (No. 8 & 9):** The full impact of song seven is particularly felt in the song of defeat on the Ijaye side (Song 8), where the Egba warrior are blamed for Ijaye's woes. The hitherto suppressed disaffection between the allies is now finally voiced and demonstrated. Clearly after this, they can no longer work together and the Egba leave the war camp. Meanwhile, Ibadan soldiers win more laurels. The now totally broken Ijaye are made short work of by the jubilant Ibadan warriors. The final kinetic blow on the Ijaye is when they fell easy prey to the hands of Ibadan soldiers who imitate the Ijaye combat song. The routed Ijaye warriors who have been in hiding, rush out when they hear the song, thinking it is their own men who have come to relieve them. Triumphant Ibadan create another song (No.9) in honour of their leader *Balogun Ibikunle*, extolling the virtues of a soldier.

## **The Kinesics of Fight or Flight**

From the above analysis of the dances and songs, two distinct goals emerge as being created by the war kinesics. The first is a motivating force to action resulting in 'fight' and the second is a demoralising force to action resulting in 'flight.' In each of the movement and song created, it will be observed that there is the calculated aim of instilling courage to the 'performer' while striking terror into the hearts of the opposing 'audience.' From the opponents' weakened spirits, the aggressors derive psychological strength which emboldens them to go fully into the offensive and be more devastating in their attacks.

A physiological report on a study carried out on swearing gives a further insight into the operational techniques of the fight or flight of war kinesics. The report suggests that body sweat on the palms and soles produced during situations of stress, such as exercises and heat, may be part of animals' (including human beings') response to coping with danger. The report states that "sweating increases the co-efficient of action

and enables animals to run better.”<sup>7</sup> Applied to a situation of “the winner takes all” like in a war, the overriding kinesic impulse is to move and run better in ‘fight’ until finally, the odds are too many against either party, and the urge to move better in ‘flight’ takes the upper hand.

The various songs and movements effected at the different stages of the war demonstrate this kinesics of flight and fight. The combat song—movements in particular, being at the scene of actual conflict and where the warrior are face to face with danger, best exemplify how war kinesics are effective tactics of war. Below, the kinesics of the combat songs of both parties will be used to illustrate in detail the ‘fight’ or ‘flight’ effect of Ijaye kinesics. The songs are reproduced again below.

1. Ibadan Warrior song:

Lead:	But the hills but the woods	<i>Afoke a figbo</i>
Chorus:	There is no one to withstand	<i>Ko s’eni tole duro</i>
	Withstand	<i>Tole duro.</i>

2. Ijaye Warrior Song:

Lead:	Bitter is the quarrel of the rivals	<i>Ija orogun Kooro</i>
Chorus:	The rivals	<i>Orogun Kooro.</i>

The Motivating Force – ‘Fight’:

As motivation to ‘fight’ both songs have strong dynamic rhythms which produce in the dancer, corresponding dynamic and strongly accented movements. The Ijaye warrior dance-song has a cross-rhythm arrangement with a strong background rhythm of four notes to the beat. When articulated in body motor beat, the kinesic effect is a steady purposeful uni-directional concentration of movement energy. Every action of the body is well coordinated to communicate a single unwavering purpose. In a war context, the purpose is ‘advance and crush.’ The Ibadan song is similar in purpose and effect. It is usually performed at a much faster tempo of eight beats on different musical instruments arranged in interlocking rhythms. The assorted drums and clappers with different points of entrance into the music produce a staccatto-like effect. The kinesic counterpart to this, is a vibratory or shaking type of movement which creates a kinesic response of intense activity and encourages violence.

Each dance-song thus produces within its performers some uniformity of action. The music acts as ‘energy gatherer’ forming and generating a cohesive basis for the kinesic response. The kinesic demonstration too, arranges the body signs and patterns coherently and systematically to produce a concerted uniform action and purposeful energy. An energy that is well channelled produces unity in action which in turn gives strength and courage; with courage, the scope of action is boundless. This is why the war-weary Ijaye soldiers rushed out when they heard their song, not knowing it was an Ibadan trick.

Demoralising Force — ‘Flights’:

The explicit force generated by the soldiers, which gives them a strong sense of unity

and action, produces the opposite effect in an opponent. The kinesthetic effect of heavy pounding feet, complemented by a fierce forward-surfing crowd with wildly flaying weapons is one of a stolid excruciating danger. To the unwary and feeble-hearted, such an impending danger generates only the kinesics of flight. The combined effect of the verbal content of the song, the musical rhythm and the overall body kinesics is a triple onslaught communicating more force, energy and violent danger than there is in reality. The illusion is created of an impending enormous force that will pulverise anything in its path, without as much as a dent on its own body. This illusion communicates a sense of inevitable danger, that only those who have signed a suicide pact will await. Thus, in order to prevent an early 'flight' of the hiding and war-weary Ijaye soldiers, the Ibadan lured them out to come out and *fight* by imitating Ijaye combat song. The ruse worked, and the Ijaye tramped out to meet their final doom.

### **Conclusion: Songs and Dances As War Tactics**

Through an adroit manipulation of words and body movements, the combatants on either side seek to intimidate their opponents. The success of their creative exploits becomes immediately reflected in the next stage of the conflict and the significance of the songs and dances in the war efforts is clearly demonstrated. Thus, undoubtedly, they function as important and effective war tactics. Each decisive stage in the Ijaye war has its own specially created song-dance weapon, and the analysis of these 'weapons' as given above, provides a credible assessment of the strength of each warring party.

The dance movements, with the songs supplying the steadying rhythm are a creative form of physical and mental preparation for the intensive and invariably violent action which will follow. They function in what Judith Hanna calls 'affective readying' effected in the sweat produced during any vigorous kinesic action. More basic than the sweat is the stimulating factor to action, that is, the kinesic effort itself. Movements stimulate both the body and the mind ready for action (fight or flight) while the coercive force of dance unites the two. The product is a co-ordination of action and thought – a physically fit and mentally alert body – the primary weapon of wars.

### **Notes and References**

1. This paper is an adaptation from a section of my Thesis 'Semiotics of Oral Literature: A kinesic perspective' Ph. D., University of Ife, 1986.
2. For example the rousing song of the Igbo people: '*Eyin nba Eyin, Nzobu nzobu eyinnba eyin*,' is a relic of the warrior tradition of the Igbo. Similarly, the shrill ululating cry of the Hausa and Kanuri women is used in welcoming their men from war expeditions.
3. One notable exception is the historian, Rev. Samuel Johnson. His book *The History of the Yorubas*, contains frequent references to songs and dances which formed part of the war offensive.

4. See Johnson Samuel, *The History of the Yorubas*, (Lagos; C.S.S. Bookshops) pp. 328–354, for a detailed account of Ijaye War.
5. Both the Yoruba original and the English translation of the songs are as documented by Rev. S. Johnson.
6. Nketia K. "The Interrelationship of African Music and dance;" *Studio Musicological* vii, (1965) pp.99, 100.
7. New York Times, "Sweating on Palms and Soles" (March 7, 1976) p.7, quoted in J. Hanna, *To Dance is Human*, pp. 184–185.
8. Hanna, J.L. *To Dance is Human* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979, 1980) p. 184.



## Chapter Twenty Two

### Notes on the Ekitiparapo Fortress at Imesi-Ile 1879-93

**S.A. Akintoye**

The Yoruba wars of the 19th century featured frequent instances of opposing camps facing each other in long drawn-out stalemates. Of these camps, the greatest were the Ibadan and Ekitiparapo camps in the hilly country between Ikirun and Imesi-Ile in 1879-93. The Ekitiparapo stronghold at Imesi-Ile represents an example of a weaker party in a war selecting a fortress on the edge of the country they have to defend, and right on the path of the enemy, and fighting the enemy off from there until he has got tired and gone away.

Before 1879, Imesi-Ile had been no more than a large Ijesa village on the rugged hills north of Ilesa. According to Ijesa traditions, the town had been one of a number of small kingdoms which had shared the Ijesa country between them before the rise of the Ilesa kingdom to a position of dominance over almost the whole of Ijesa in the late 18th century. The same traditions suggest that the choice of its hilly site was part of the town's reaction to frequent Ilesa aggressions in the more distant past, and that the Ekiti town of Imesi-Igbodo, situated further up the hills away from Ilesa, was founded some time in the 18th century by some of the inhabitants of Imesi-Ile who got tired of the frequent Ilesa attacks.

The town appears, however, to have developed into a market centre of some importance. The old trade route which passed through Ijero, Ikoro, Imesi-Igbodo, Imesi-Ile, Igbajo to Ikirun is reputed to be one of the oldest routes connecting the Ekiti, Ijesa and Osun countries. Traders from Ilesa, Ekiti and Osun used to meet at Imesi-Ile or Igbajo for trade. The old route is still there and, in spite of motor roads through other parts of the country, it is still heavily used.

In the middle of the 19th century, the Ibadan began to invade the Ekiti and Ijesa countries. Their usual approach to Ekiti and Ijesa was through the Imesi-Ile route, and Imesi-Ile was therefore one of the earliest Ijesa towns to come under Ibadan. About 1850, an Ibadan army under *Balogun* Ibikunle subdued Imesi-Ile and other neighbouring Ijesa Town. In the next 25 years, Ibadan gradually conquered and reduced to tributaries almost all the Ijesa, Igbomina, Ekiti and Akoko countries. In this, her success was due mostly to the fact that the peoples of these areas were fragmented into a large number of states most of which were small and weak, and did not learn to unite against Ibadan early enough.

By the beginning of the 1870s, however, some desire to cooperate against Ibadan began to manifest itself among the Ekiti and Ijesa. Then, in 1878, seeing Ibadan entangled in a war with the Egba and Ijebu, the Ekiti, Ijesa, Akoko and Igbomina came together in a grand confederacy which they called the Ekitiparapo. After a faulty start

in the dry season of 1878,<sup>1</sup> the Ekitiparapo army was reconsolidated in 1879 and began the attack on Ibadan's power from Imesi-Ile by destroying Igbajo and marching on Ikirun, two of Ibadan's main fortresses. When the Ibadan army came out to the defence of Ikirun, the Ekitiparapo forces retreated along the old route in Imesi-Ile until they reached a particularly good defensive position some 20 minutes walk from the town. Here, they pitched their camp, and for the next 15 years, Imesi-Ile (which for all practical purposes must be taken as including the old town and the new camp) was the fortress city of the Ekitiparapo, defending a country of about 4,000 square miles.

The Yoruba historian, Samuel Johnson, says that the Ekitiparapo 'lured' the Ibadan to this site. And the traditions of the Ekiti and Ijesa themselves suggest that the selection of Imesi-Ile as the spot for the final resistance against Ibadan was preceded by very elaborate discussions, investigations and consultations of the oracles. No doubt, the oracles and the men chose this place because of its great defensive advantages. As has been pointed out, Imesi-Ile is situated about 1000 feet above sea level in the range of hills running through western Ekiti and northern Ijesa. These hills rise to higher points in the neighbourhood of Imesi-Igbodo and Efon to the east of Imesi-Ile. Westwards of Imesi-Ile, in the direction of Igbajo, the country features steep high hills and very deep valleys. Moreover, all these hills are covered by thick jungles.

There is evidence that the Ekitiparapo leaders would have preferred Igbajo to Imesi-Ile. Igbajo is situated on the western edge of the hills, some five miles west of Imesi-Ile, and from Igbajo the hills slope steeply westwards to Ada, Iragbiji and Ikirun. Igbajo itself was originally an Ijesa town, but by the 1870s it had a preponderant Oyo population because of the Oyo migrations from the north early in the century. As far as the Ekitiparapo were concerned, the edge of the hills at Igbajo marked the boundary between Ekitiparapo and Ibadan territories. The route up the hills to Igbajo was a particularly difficult one. It was because Igbajo was so supremely suitable for a last ditch defence post against Ibadan that the Ekitiparapo worked so hard in 1878 to get Igbajo to join the confederacy and, when persuasion failed, they attacked and destroyed the town.

Having thus disposed of Igbajo, Imesi-Ile became the obvious choice for a fortress. The site of the camp outside the town was on the side of a hill facing towards Igbajo. The Ibadan established their own camp on the slope of another hill facing the Ekitiparapo camp. The latter slope was hemmed in on its right and left sides by deep gorges, and was so narrow that it constricted the Ibadan forces and gave them little or no room for deploying. The slope occupied by the Ekitiparapo camp was wider, dropped more gently, and therefore made manoeuvring much easier.<sup>2</sup>

The two camps were separated by a fairly wide 'open country' which, until 1886, served as the battlefield. Every part of this field was visible from the Ekitiparapo camp, thus making a surprise assault by the Ibadan impossible.

Every visitor to the war fronts testified to the military strength of the Ekitiparapo stronghold. The report of the Higgins Commission of 1886 described its position as "exceptionally strong for native warfare. Mountains on either side of Imesi-Ipole (Imesi-Ile), an Ekiti town, and bush and forest in the rear, and open country between it and the Ibadan camp." In 1884, Father Holley said that because bare rocks and impenetrable woods surrounded the Ekitiparapo position, it was virtually impregnable.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, on the side facing the Ibadan camp, the Ekitiparapo camp was protected with a strong

wall and ditch "with guard houses here and there along it."<sup>4</sup> The camp opened to the battlefield by a large gate with a heavy carved wooden door strongly defended with sentinel post.

Such were the defences of the camp on the side facing the Ibadan army. But this was only part of a greater system of defences surrounding the town and camp. From Imesi-Ile, the hills slope down towards Ilesa, and down this a number of routes ran to Ilesa through Esa and Ibokun. From Ada behind the Ibadan lines a little-frequented path passes round the bottom of the hills, opening out at Ibokun. This meant that on the Ibokun side, Imesi-Ile was exposed to the Ibadan army. To correct this weakness, a garrison was established at Ibokun and another at Otan-Ile between Ibokun and Imesi-Ile. Furthermore, at a rugged spot some two miles from Imesi-Ile on the route between Imesi-Ile and Ibokun, a mighty ditch was dug and a sentinel post established. The traditions suggest that this was done when a small band of Ibadan war-boys managed to slip through Ibokun and Otan-Ile to attack Imesi-Ile. The ditch is so wide and so deep that local traditions have ascribed its digging to some supernatural intervention in support of the Ekitiparapo.

Even then, the Ekitiparapo were still vulnerable from the Ilesa direction. Ilesa itself and the villages between it and Imesi-Ile (through Esa) were virtually empty as their people had mostly moved to Imesi-Ile. Now, the Ibadan forces could attack Ilesa from two directions and thence menace Imesi-Ile or even circumvent Imesi-Ile to invade Ekiti. The two directions were the Osogbo-Ilese route and the Ife-Ilesa route. Osogbo was under Ibadan, while the Ife, until 1882, were vassals of Ibadan and contributed contingents to the Ibadan forces. In September 1880, a small Ibadan force from Osogbo attacked and seized the Ijesa village of Ilase and attempted to penetrate to Ilesa. But they were met by a contingent stationed at Ilesa that routed them and threw them out of Ilase.<sup>5</sup> Thereafter, a strong patrol post was established at Oke-Bode between Ilesa and Osogbo. The type of rigid efficiency from which Alvan Willson suffered at Oke-Bode in 1891 was characteristic of that outpost.<sup>6</sup>

About March 1881, the Ibadan War Council decided to surprise the Ekitiparapo from the Ife direction by capturing the Ijesa village of Osu between Ife and Ilesa. The Ife authorities were approached to supply reinforcements to the Ibadan detachment which, after capturing Osu, would "blockade Ilesa and the territory of the allies, (so) that they might quit their stronghold (Imesi-Ile)." However, the Ife, who had never reconciled themselves to their subordination to Ibadan and were secretly anxious to see Ibadan's downfall, leaked the plan to the Ekitiparapo. The Ekitiparapo reacted by begging the Owa of Ilesa to cede Osu to the Ife. Therefore, when the time came for the execution of Ibadan's plan, the Ife protested that Osu was an Ife village and that they could not allow the Ibadan to sack it.<sup>7</sup> Naturally, this led to quarrel between Ibadan and Ife which steadily aggravated as the months passed. Finally, early in 1882, the Ibadan decided that the Ife obstacle had to be liquidated and, with the support of Modakeke, a settlement outside Ile-Ife and an enemy of the Ife, attacked and sacked the town. Thereupon, the Ekitiparapo hastily built up a second army which they sent under Chief Fabunmi, the second leading chief of the Ekitiparapo forces, to join the remnants of the Ife forces in destroying Modakeke and controlling the Ife area. Fabunmi failed to destroy Modakeke because the Ibadan sent a large force to its defence, but the Ekitiparapo forces effectively contained the Ibadan and Modakeke until early 1887



when both the Ibadan and Ekitiparapo agreed to withdraw their forces from the area and to avoid further interference in Ife and Modakeke affairs.<sup>8</sup> Until this agreement, Fabunmi's army in Ife constituted a powerful outpost to the Imesi-Ile stronghold.

The story of Imesi-Ile between 1879 and 1893 falls into two phases — first from 1879 to September 1886, and second from the latter date to March 1893. In the earlier period, the town and the camp remained physically separated presenting the picture of an old town and a new suburb. In September 1886, owing to the intervention of the British administration of Lagos, a Treaty of peace, friendship and commerce was entered into by the Ibadan, Ekitiparapo, Ife, Modakeke, Ijebu and the *Alaafin* by which, among other things, Ibadan recognised the independence of the states of the Ekitiparapo and both undertook not to encroach upon each other's territories in the future. The camps were then broken up, and the Ibadan withdrew to Ikirun while the Ekitiparapo forces withdrew into Imesi-Ile. The hope of the Ekitiparapo leaders was that their forces would now be disbanded. But, because the Ilorin, who had also been locked in combat with the Ibadan at Ofa since 1879, would not agree to negotiate, the Ibadan forces got bogged down at Ikirun. In response, the Ekitiparapo leaders decided to maintain their forces intact at Imesi-Ile to be on the alert against any possible resumption of hostilities by the Ibadan. This state of armed guard remained until 1893 when, again as a result of British intervention, the Ibadan forces at Ikirun, the Ilorin forces at Ofa and the Ekitiparapo forces at Imesi-Ile evacuated their positions and every man began to go home.

Even before September 1886, however, the town and camp were closely integrated. The *Oloja* (ruler) of Imesi-Ile continued ideally to be recognised as the ruler of his town, but in fact the town was no longer its former self but a new metropolis whose rise had meant the initiation of a new inclusive loyalty for the Ekiti, Ijesa, Igbomina and Akoko who had come together in the Ekitiparapo. The real governors of the place, therefore, were not the *Oloja* and his chiefs but the Ekitiparapo High Command.

Of this top leadership of the Ekitiparapo, there are two segments, the group of military chiefs and the group of *Oba*. As the commanders of the fighting men, the military chiefs, under the leadership of Chief Ogedengbe, had much greater control, but scrupulous care was always taken to consult the *Oba* in all important issues. And in this way a smooth management of affairs was maintained.<sup>9</sup>

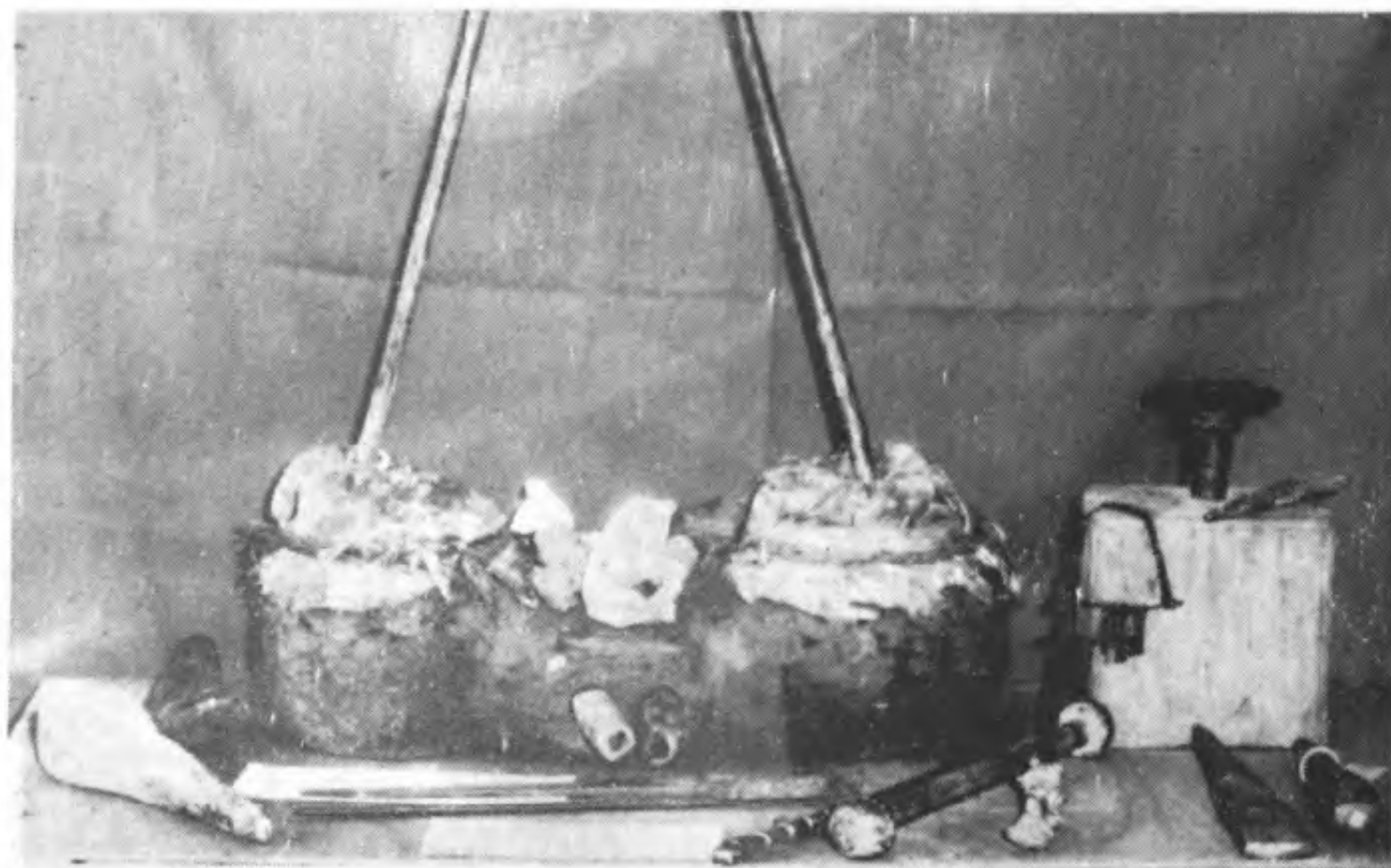
In 1886, the population of the camp was estimated to be about 40,000. Most of these were fighting men, but many of them brought their wives and children to the camp. Within the town itself, a further 8,000 people were estimated.<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that, outside Imesi-Ile, the largest town in the Ekitiparapo territories, Ilesa, had only about half the population of the camp (about 20,000). In fact, the above figure of 40,000 was recorded in the rainy season months when most people stayed away to work on their farms. It was during the dry season that the Ekitiparapo drew most heavily on the human resources of the confederate territories — and the population of Imesi-Ile (both camp and town) were usually much higher in these months than in the rainy season.

Until September 1886 the war chiefs lived in the camp, While those *Obas* who came to the front lived in the town. But almost continuous consultation went on between the camp and the town. In fact each of the war chiefs also had a compound in the town where he resided when he had business to transact there. As tradition forbade the *Obas* to see each other's faces or take part in actual fighting, they did not visit the camp, and for purposes of consultation the war chiefs had to see each *Oba* in his royal compound.<sup>11</sup>





**Fig.22.1:** *Throne of Oba Famodun I of Igbajo during the Kiriji war in 1886*



**Fig.22.2:** *Bellows used for making gun pellets on the battle front during the Kiriji war*

In the years after September 1886, when all the *Oba*, war chiefs, fighting men and their dependants lived together in the town, the same system of government by the war chiefs in frequent consultation with the *Oba* persisted. Meetings of the chiefs were held in Ogedengbe's compound and the general assemblies of the people on its foreground.<sup>12</sup> This made Ogedengbe's compound the political centre of the town. The leading chiefs also lived in large compounds, surrounded by their war-boys and dependants—as well as by people from their own parts of the country - just a replica of the traditional Yoruba *agbo-ile*.

The coming together of the people at Imesi-Ile had its religious side. Each community brought its own little *Ogun* shrine from home and established it outside the tent of its leading chief. But the centre of the communal religious worship was the central *Ogun* shrine which was set up near the Commander-in-Chief's tent. Here all the chiefs met daily to propitiate the god of war. There was another smaller shrine at the gate to the camp which, when Higgins and others visited the camp in 1886, had a number of idols in it copiously drenched in sacrificial blood. In September, 1886, the *Ogun* shrine was moved into the town and set up outside Ogedengbe's compound, and for the next seven years it continued to be the centre of worship in the town.

Supplying the large population of this fortress with food was a crucial problem. When they were not busy fighting, the men employed their time cultivating the surrounding countryside. In this way Imesi-Ile was surrounded by very expansive farms planted with yams, beans and corn.<sup>13</sup> However, the greater proportion of the town's food came from far and wide in the Ekiti, Ilesa, Akoko and Igbomina countries. Each town and village in this area collected articles of food from the farmers who remained at home, and these were sent at regular intervals to Imesi-Ile. To ensure safety of the parties of young men and women who carried these vital loads, patrol posts were established at the most important road junctions in the country.

In addition, a lot of trading, partly in foodstuffs, went on. The women who came to the front with their husbands spent their time buying in different parts of the country and selling at Imesi-Ile. Other traders from all over the country also came. In the camp, there were open patches here and there where women built sheds and spread out their wares for sale. In the town itself, commercial activity was intense. In fact, in the 1870s, Imesi-Ile was the most important focal point of the massive trade in arms and ammunition, slaves, imported and home-made cloths, palm oil and kernel. There was trading between Lagos and the interior through Ondo, Ekiti, Ijesa, Akoko, Igbomina and Ilorin. Also Nupe traders came to exchange their goods at Imesi-Ile with Lagos, Ijebu and Ondo traders.<sup>14</sup> After September 1886, large numbers of the Ibadan came daily to the Imesi-Ile market.

Until 1893, the Ekitiparapo kept up their guard against Ibadan. Mostly because the true intentions of the Ibadan leaders at Ikirun were not understood at Imesi-Ile, many young men thought it was dangerous even to allow Ibadan women to come to the Imesi-Ile market. In 1888, following a small incident in which some Ekiti travellers were kidnapped in Ibadan territory, the assembly forced Ogedengbe and the other war chiefs to authorise the arrest of Ibadan traders in the market. Some 48 of them were then arrested, most of whom were later released. But the overall effect of such incidents was that both Ibadan and Ekitiparapo remained suspicious of each other. The Ibadan garrisoned their frontier towns; and the Ekitiparapo answered by establishing observation posts near the old site of the camp and at many points on the hills overlooking the Ibadan territory.

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**SECTION C**

**External Involvement and  
the Search for Peace**

## **Chapter Twenty Three**

# **War Termination and Conflict Reduction in Yoruba Military Tradition**

**R. A. Olaniyan**

The problem of war termination, as distinct from mere cessation of hostilities and the signing of a peace treaty to establish a formal resolution of the conflicting interests which had caused a war, is an essential aspect of diplomacy of war. It has to do with what to do to bring the war to an end in case things do not work out as envisaged.

Though R.S. Smith has rightly observed that to the Yoruba, "diplomacy was a fine and familiar art," and "was conducted along recognised lines and according to a strict and practical protocol"<sup>1</sup> this aspect of Yoruba traditional military strategy and diplomacy has not received enough scholarly attention it deserves. Our intention in this chapter is to attempt an analysis of the process of war termination and conflict reduction in Yoruba military tradition using examples from the Yoruba wars of the 19th century, particularly the Kiriiji/Ekitiparapo War which ended with the treaty of 1886.

The process of terminating a military stalemate, for example, involves negotiations which may be more arduous than a situation in which there is a clear victor. In a total war, the aim of each side is total victory and hence the unconditional surrender of the adversary is sought. In a war like this, there is little room for negotiations as a way of terminating hostilities in that each side struggles to vanquish the other. It is only in a conflict in which the parties seek limited objectives that negotiations could play a vital role in bringing hostilities to an end. But even here, the extent to which each side perceives and defines its 'limited' objectives may differ, and this difference may affect the course and nature of the negotiations needed to bring about an end of hostilities.

Two sets of variables may affect the decision of a state to continue a conflict or terminate it. These may be internal or external. Among the domestic factors which may affect the ability of a state to continue or terminate a war are the personalities of the leaders,<sup>2</sup> the reactions to the relevant political institutions, power and influence of the military leaders, the influence of public opinion and pressure groups in the decision-making process. The external environment also has a great deal of influence on a state's desire or ability to continue or terminate a military conflict. This external dimension may take different forms. A state's ability or willingness to continue or terminate a conflict may be constrained by its military obligations to other states which may call for urgent attention. If a state depends on another for military assistance or political support, its decision may be significantly circumscribed by the preparedness of the other state to make good its promises. Indeed, the other state's willingness may be affected by the changing fortunes of war which may create the need to recognise that there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies but only permanent interests.

There are conflicts in which the aims of war may pose some problems and make it difficult for the warring parties to come to an early settlement. If, for example, the intention of one of the parties is to completely crush the opponent, or 'teach the enemy a lesson,' so that the vanquished would no longer be able to constitute any serious threat, then, resistance by the seemingly weak party may prolong the conflict. In the process too, there may be unexpected interventions or change of allegiance to the extent that there may be a stalemate instead of a clear victory caused by a new balance of power.

This development in turn may lead to another wartime phenomenon which feeds on the public's perception of the cost of war in terms of human and financial resources. A new resolve to obtain the maximum benefit to compensate for the sacrifices so far made may emerge.

How does the public come to this mood? It is possible that the leaders themselves may believe that a heightened public support of the war efforts may see the nation over the temporary impasse. But the whipping up of public passion to obtain victory over a recalcitrant adversary may lead to escalation rather than termination. It is this kind of stubborn refusal by the leaders to face up to the new realities that may make attempts to effect a compromise settlement difficult.

In such a situation, the leaders may help or hinder the process of extricating the state from a war whose end may not be in sight. Their perception and interpretation of the national interest may serve to put in perspective the urgency to terminate or prolong the conflict. The danger is that leaders may confuse their own personal interests with those of the nation. When such is the case, it would appear that unless there is a change of heart or a change of leadership, the conflict may become protracted and the possibility of success chimerical.

There is another factor which is a product of the time of conflict. It is the fact that war situation does enhance the power and the influence of the military leaders to the extent that they may even overshadow the political leaders. Their military exploits and the myths built around them may make them larger than life. And in the pre-literate situation of the Yoruba traditional communities in the 19th century, the power deriving from magical sources often associated with military leaders helped to increase their power and prestige not only among the rank and file but also among the populace in general. The assessment by such hero-leaders of the prospects for victory may become crucial in any attempt to disengage.

We must however, not jump to the conclusion that it is only the military leaders who could make war termination difficult. This is far from the truth. Indeed, the civilian political leadership may be the obstacle in the way of reaching a negotiated peace. It is also possible that both the military and the civilian leadership may be calculating on gaining an advantage on the battlefield so as to strengthen their position at the conference table. When this strategy to enhance the negotiating posture is adopted, there is every likelihood that the other party in the conflict, not wanting to suffer a disadvantage, may also choose to effect the necessary resistance. The upshoot of these approaches is a predictable heightening of tension and prolongation of the conflict since neither side would willingly make concessions unless there is a reversal on the battlefield.

But both sides may not wait until there is a reversal before the steps towards ending hostilities are taken. From time to time, each side takes stock to see that the achievement

of the state's war objectives is sustainable by the available resources. As the cost of the war increases and the need to continue is being questioned, so will the number of negotiable war expectations increase. In other words, there will come the need to settle for the minimum objective beyond which neither would entertain any compromise unless there is a military or political necessity. Such a necessity may be brought about by a serious depletion of the available resources or new developments on the domestic or international scene which may make continuation of the war efforts unrealistic and unwise. It may also be that the rate of casualties in the war suddenly becomes alarmingly high for one or both sides, that suing for peace becomes the only option left. Such a development may lead to negotiations which the parties may enter into as of necessity or with great reluctance. In either case, much will depend on a number of issues on which there is bound to be some difficulty and which may further delay the final agreement to terminate the war.

When and how should the war end? What territorial adjustments should be effected? Questions of withdrawal of forces, exchange of prisoners, payment of indemnities and the establishment of postwar political structures to sustain the peace – these are vital issues that will, no doubt, come up in the process of negotiating war termination. While each side is doing its utmost to protect its interests, there may be the need to make concessions and work out compromises in the spirit of give-and-take.

How much time negotiations take will, of course depend on the resistance to yield on the issues on the part of the parties. Issues may become so intractable as to necessitate foot-dragging by one party hoping for a more auspicious and advantageous time when its bargaining power might improve since the domestic and external environments remain dynamic.

The process of negotiating termination of military hostilities may require the intervention of a third party capable of either influencing the two sides or tipping the balance in favour of one of the parties. The threat to perceived interests if war is continued may force the parties to the negotiating table even when solid agreement has not been reached on all the issues. The third party should, as much as possible, enjoy a good measure of respectability and acceptability among the warring parties to facilitate effective negotiations.

The Kiriji-Ekitiparapo War offers us a good opportunity to examine these and other factors which influence war termination and peace negotiations in Yoruba military tradition. It is to these that we must now turn.

In its causes, course, impact and in the issues involved, the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War engulfed all of the Yoruba-culture area either directly or indirectly. It encompassed virtually all the facets of the complex politics and revolutionary convulsions which gripped the whole of the Yoruba country for much of the 19th century. In other words, there were many conflicts manifesting themselves in the war. In the main, it involved the struggle for power and influence within the Oyo-Yoruba state system, the Ibadan-Ilorin conflict, the struggle for survival mounted by the Egba and Ijebu against Ibadan, and the concerted reaction by the eastern Yoruba states and Ife to free themselves from the Ibadan imperial yoke and apparent threat to general peace. From the point of view of each group's interest, a decisive victory was what was desired.

At the heart of the matter were two important and inter-related factors: the fact of the ever-menacing power of Ibadan and the person of her generalissimo – *Aare*



Latosisa-whose name struck fear into many of the other Yoruba powers. The rise and expansion of Ibadan had been so phenomenal that virtually every state felt greatly threatened. Even Ife, the traditionally revered ancestral home of the Yoruba, was not spared from the general feeling of insecurity. Ibadan's power was based on an awesome war-machine which by reputation and the seemingly insatiable rapacity of her war leaders, had become in the Yoruba country, an Indian juggernaut. It was mortally feared by all the kingdoms that sooner or later it would crush all.

This fear and foreboding caused by Ibadan's colossal power and expansionist ambitions, aroused in her enemies, a collective will to resist at all cost.<sup>3</sup> It is important to bear in mind that Ibadan's hegemony had disrupted the balance of power that existed before her emergence as a fearsome power in the Yoruba country. Certainly, the determination to resist did not help the cause of terminating hostilities but rather prolonged the conflict. The example of the Egba during the British attempt in 1879-1880 to bring about peace illustrates this point forcefully.<sup>4</sup> The Egba had made it clear by 1879 that nothing short of total victory over the Ibadan and the elimination of *Aare Latosisa* could force them to withdraw from the war. And, the flirtations between the Ijebu traders and the Ibadan notwithstanding, the position of Oba Fidipote, the *Awujale* of Ijebu, was clearly one of stout resistance.

Neither was the fear of Ibadan removed even by the Ijebu-Ibadan peace of 1882 following the successful revolt against the *Awujale* by the army led by *Balogun Onafowokan*. What followed was only an armed peace, for Onafowokan himself, saw the need to retain his army intact until the final peace of 1886.<sup>5</sup> The fear and suspicion of Ibadan had become so implacably entrenched that even though the Ijebu opened the Oru market to Ibadan traders following the peace of 1882, they believed only a clear defeat of Ibadan could assure permanent peace.

The disastrous routing of the Ekitiparapo army by the Ibadan under the *Balogun Ajayi Ogboriefon* late in 1878 at Ikirun<sup>6</sup> did not mean the disintegration of the Confederate army. In spite of this defeat, the Ekiti and Ijesa chiefs with the support of their people in Lagos, stood steadfast in their commitment to achieve liberation from the Ibadan imperial domination. Their acclaimed leader was Fabunmi, the brave warrior prince from Imesi-Igbodo, whose iron will and uncompromising doggedness sustained the Confederacy in the revolt against Ibadan.<sup>7</sup> The overriding war aim of the Ekitiparapo was to expel the Ibadan from their land, thereby put an end to Ibadan imperialism. Their strategy was not only to consolidate the Confederate forces but also to harness the anti-Ibadan feelings and forces in Osun area and hopefully mount a joint assault on the common enemy whose rapacity everywhere had become common knowledge.

The efforts of the Ekitiparapo yielded fruits in the Osun district. It is reported that even though towns like Ada, Otan-Ayegbaju and Igbajo refused to join their Ijesa kinsmen to wage war against the Ibadan, essentially because of the high-handedness of Ijesa, the attitude of the inhabitants of these towns underwent a complete change during the war because of the oppression of the Ibadan army which caused a lot of discontent in the area. The Ekitiparapo propaganda also added to the growing anti-Ibadan feeling in the area. The stiff resistance put up by the Confederate army and the unexpected reverses suffered by the Ibadan army affected the morale of the fighting forces as well as the Ibadan chiefs who blamed it all on the *Aare*.

The *Aare* himself began to feel the pressures from 1882. The reports of casualties

from the war front especially the death of prominent chiefs — the commander of his infantry, as well as the *Osi* and the *Ekerin* for example — and the frequent fire incidents which destroyed several areas in Ibadan, created a climate of general disappointment and frustration.<sup>8</sup> Ibadan had suddenly begun to be on the receiving end from the Ekitiparapo forces.

Several factors accounted for this change of fortune for Ibadan. The unyielding determination of the Ekitiparapo war chiefs not to give up in spite of set-backs was, to be sure, a major factor which prolonged the war and denied the Ibadan a clear victory. There was also the problem of the overbearing personality of Latosisa which did not help matters.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, many of the chiefs entertained the fear that a clear victory for Ibadan in this war was victory for the *Aare*. Their reluctance to put in every effort to win the war was therefore a deliberate expression of mistrust of the intention of the leader. The internal wrangling was another manifestation of political discontent in the Ibadan leadership.

The role of the Ekitiparapo Society in Lagos turned out to be a most crucial factor. Made up of businessmen and educated elite from the Confederate states living in Lagos, the Society successfully explored and exploited all avenues to purchase more effective breach-loading rifles, like the Snedders, Mauser, Winchester and Remington rifles, for the use of the Confederates. Their contribution immeasurably turned the tide of war in favour of the Confederates. These new weapons were more accurate and lethal and did wreak havoc in the Ibadan camp. With the use of these new rifles, the Ekitiparapo now had the upperhand in the new balance of terror and violence.

This situation was to continue well into 1884. The Ibadan could not match this superior fire-power and when they were able to obtain the new weapons, they were in quantities not large enough to effect any dramatic change in the war front.

There were other problems as well. The Ibadan neighbours — the Ijebu and the Egba — particularly the Egba, often constituted a constant threat to the security of the Ibadan at home. The former were a more manageable menace since their occasional raids on the Ibadan farms in the border areas were more easily repelled. The story was different in the case of the Egba. The Egba raids were usually very well organised to have maximum impact. Usually they came in droves and left destruction on the Ibadan farms. The frequency of these raids put Ibadan security measures to a great task as farmers were kidnapped in addition to destruction of farm products.

Certain other developments between late 1881 and 1882 gave the Ibadan war chiefs considerable anxiety. Indeed, it appeared that by the close of 1882, the total blockade of Ibadan by the Ekitiparapo was an almost accomplished fact. These developments need to be examined, even if briefly, in order to appreciate subsequent attempts by the *Aare* to extricate the Ibadan from the worsening situation, and why he appealed for British intervention.<sup>10</sup> All this, as we shall see later, is a clear reflection that things were not going as envisaged by the Ibadan. But even in these difficult times, the Dahomey began late in 1881 to make incursions into the Upper Ogun district with distabilising effects. Several towns and villages in the area and in the western part of the Oyo country were over-run by the invaders. The significance of this is that the Dahomey further reduced the limited interaction between the Ibadan and the Egba traders which was all along allowed in the Ibarapa and Upper Ogun districts.<sup>11</sup> Even the supply to the Ibadan of a limited amount of arms and ammunition smuggled through this area by the

maverick Egba Chief Ogundipe who was Latosisa's intimate friend became greatly hampered.

As we noted a little earlier, by 1882, Ibadan's chances of getting large quantities of ammunition from the coast had become virtually sealed. Several reasons could be adduced for this critical situation. Actually, the only road which remained open to the Ibadan from the beginning of the war was the Ondo road through Ile-Ife. The other roads - the Egba road, the Ijebu road, the north-bound road through Ilorin and the road to Benin—had remained closed against the Ibadan since the beginning of the war. The defection of the Ife to the Ekitiparapo and the subsequent show of strength by the alliances—the Ekitiparapo and the Ijebu second army supporting the Ife, and the Ibadan coming to the aid of Modakeke—created a new balance of power and further compounded the already complex situation. In the circumstances, the chances of a clear victory were permanently turned into a stalemate. In the war that ensued, Ile-Ife was destroyed and Modakeke blockaded by a combined Ife-Ekitiparapo army. In the process, the attack and the counter-attack opened yet another front in a war that had dragged on since 1879. But the import of this to the Ibadan war effort was that the Ondo road was no longer open to their traders. Whereas, the trade on this road was now dominated by the Ekitiparapo traders. This, of course, is not to say that the road was completely free from developments that from time to time threatened the security of the road even for the Ekitiparapo traders. The inter-communal conflicts between the different peoples on the road caused occasional concern.<sup>12</sup>

However, the danger to the Confederate war efforts was not as serious as it might at first appear. By diplomacy and practical politics, the Ekitiparapo kept the road open to their traders for a year after 1883. This assured their side in the war a comparative advantage over the Ibadan for they had greater access to the ammunition marts on the coast. Throughout the war, the Confederacy made use of the Ilorin road, the Benin road, the Ijebu road and the Ondo road.<sup>13</sup> This fact did cause considerable anxiety in the Ibadan camp during this period since the main accesses to the coast were closed to their traders.<sup>14</sup>

The war, it would appear, was not going the way it was anticipated. The Ibadan were now blockaded. This greatly affected the supply of ammunition since it meant that the Ibadan no longer had direct access to the coast where the imported weapons could be obtained. While the problem of dwindling weapons supply was staring the Ibadan in the face, the Ekitiparapo not only had access to the coast but also had weapons purchased for them by the members of the Ekitiparapo Society in Lagos thus enhancing their position considerably.

With all the reverses piling up difficulties for the Ibadan, with the roads to the coast closed against them, with the suspended enthusiasm for the war among the Ibadan chiefs because of their suspicion of the *Aare*, and the ever toughening resistance by the Ekitiparapo, even the *Kakanfo* himself, by late 1882, had started to think of ways of extricating the Ibadan from the war. In this seeming predicament, the *Aare* lamented the possible fate of Ibadan and sought help so that she might not be destroyed. First, he sought the good offices of Rev. Wood to "deliver him from the conspiracy which the whole country has formed against him;" and further, to prevent the Yoruba country from being destroyed. Second, he sought for British intervention through the Governor of Lagos. He maintained that he had always been willing to end the war but blamed the



failure to reach a settlement on the incompetence of those who had tried to intervene to end hostilities. He contended that the only reason why his enemies rose against him was because he stoutly resisted the Egba's trade in slaves.<sup>15</sup> The situation was so critical and the frustration so great that it was surmised that the great war leader once attempted committing suicide.<sup>16</sup> It was even rumoured in the Ekitiparapo camp that the Ibadan might call it quits and abandoned the war.<sup>17</sup>

The situation, however, suddenly changed for the better late 1884 and early 1885 when the Ibadan obtained a supply of Snider rifles through a Lagos businessman. This new turn of events brought a renewed hope to the Ibadan who immediately engaged the Confederate forces in fierce encounters. This new euphoria over their improved position was to last only a season. In August 1885, the Ibadan lost their most celebrated and feared leader, the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo*, Momoh Latosisa.<sup>18</sup> He died in the camp of Kiriji. The *Aare* was succeeded by the *Balogun*, Chief Ajayi Osungbekun, who did not possess the dynamism or the charisma of his illustrious predecessor. Indeed, it could be correctly said that the *Balogun*, rather than coming to grips with the problems the Ibadan were facing, actually became part of the problem — problem of leadership at a critical period.

The Ibadan were now facing very urgent problems which could, and indeed, determine the course of events. The leadership problem was a real and pressing issue. Now that Latosisa was no longer around to infuse in the Ibadan war efforts his stubborn implacability which had hitherto characterised his perspective since the beginning of the war, it would seem that a change in the tempo of the war was in the offing.

It was clear that Osungbekun was not another Latosisa. Compared with his predecessor, he was dull and uninspiring. He could hardly fire the imagination of his chiefs and fighting forces. The result was that a pall of dispiritedness hung over them sapping their enthusiasm for battle. In addition to this state of affairs, the supply of rifles which had buoyed up the hopes of the Ibadan in 1884—85 was, in 1886, no longer forthcoming.<sup>19</sup> With these twin developments, domestic political change and depletion of ammunition, the Ibadan found themselves seriously handicapped to embark on any aggressive foray. They therefore stayed in their camp.

This period of quiet in the Ibadan camp beginning from late 1885 coincided with the period when the Ekitiparapo too had become weary of the war. The stalemate provided the auspicious atmosphere for the termination of hostilities. The peace moves that were made from then on, therefore had better prospects of achieving success, and it is these peace negotiations that we must now examine to appreciate the diplomatic efforts which led to the final denouement of the conflict and establishment of peace.

It is not that attempts had not been made prior to 1885 to achieve peace. The chief cause of failure in each case remained the widespread fear of the growing power and the imperial ambition of Ibadan. The awe-inspiring personality of Latosisa and what he stood for also contributed to the failure of peace moves before 1885. The common wish among the Yoruba powers was to see Ibadan defeated and cut to size. The process of realising this objective prolonged the war. And these twin causes of fear continued to feed the thirst for action until the second half of 1885 — specifically until the death of Latosisa in August of that year.



The earliest efforts were made first to end hostilities between the Ibadan and their two southern adversaries — the Ijebu and the Egba. Latosisa himself tried unsuccessfully, to appease these powers, then used the Ijebu traders in Ibadan to serve as intermediaries. These efforts and his attempt to use the *Alaafin's* influence in 1879 to restore peace with the Egba proved unavailing. The Lagos government also made attempts to reconcile the Ibadan with their Ijebu and Egba neighbours by sending emissaries to them, but all these efforts proved effete.<sup>20</sup> *Alaafin's* failure to persuade the Egbas to open their roads to the Ibadan in 1881 and 1882 sealed the hope of using the Yoruba powers to put an end to the war. Not even the intervention of the *Ooni-elect*, Chief Aderin, at the behest of the *Alaafin* could bring about peace. The distrust of the Ibadan was so pervasive that opponents were cautious in dealing with them. Here, we must underscore this factor of the common fear of the power of Ibadan and her leader which constituted a real and present danger and made any compromise difficult. It was the prevailing desire that the cause of general anxiety should be humbled or removed completely. That kind of mood or climate of opinion could only lead to prolonged resistance.

Since the efforts of the two Yoruba potentates — the *Alaafin* and the *Ooni-elect* — could not achieve a ceasefire, the colonial government in Lagos was approached by the former to intervene. The Lt.-Governor of Lagos despatched emissaries to the *Alaafin* and the Ibadan as well as the Ekitiparapo inviting them to send representatives to Lagos. The Ife and Ondo representatives also participated, but this new round of negotiations also floundered apparently because of irreconcilable positions held tenaciously by the two sides<sup>21</sup>

There was however, some doubt about the credibility of the *Alaafin* and his brand of diplomacy. The Ibadan always had cause to suspect his complicity. It was no secret that Ibadan's power and Latosisa engendered universal fear among the Yoruba kingdoms. The Ibadan were greatly disturbed that the *Alaafin* had been secretly supporting their enemies since the beginning of the conflict. While he wanted peace, he nevertheless harboured a secret desire to see Ibadan's power greatly reduced.<sup>22</sup>

There were rumours and threats that the Ibadan might actually attack Oyo to punish the *Alaafin* for his duplicity. Indeed, it was suspected that the *Alaafin* had some secret diabolical understanding with the Egba. The suspicion was created by the fact that Egba raids on the Ibadan farms followed almost predictably each time the *Alaafin* sent his emissaries to Abeokuta purportedly to persuade the Egba to open their road. Perhaps in an attempt to prove his goodwill to the Ibadan, and prevent further deterioration in his relations with them, he sent some troops, gunpowder, food and a credible *Babalawo* in 1880 to assist them at the Kiriji War front at Igbajo. As it turned out, this gesture did not change anything.

By 1882, the closure of the Egba and Ijebu roads had begun to have serious negative effect on the Ibadan prospects to replenish their arms and ammunition with fresh purchases. The closure of these roads also adversely affected normal trade to the extent that most articles in common use in the whole Oyo country were no longer obtainable. The situation was now critical for the Ibadan but they could not, without doing an untold damage to their own image, abandon the war. Instead, they embarked on a diplomatic blitz appealing to the authorities in Ife and Ondo to intervene and bring about a peaceful settlement.

The *Alaafin's* attempt to exploit the opportunity of Ibadan's predicament by organising a negotiated peace nearly ended in total fiasco. The Ekitiparapo had suspected that the joint meeting of the two sides to which the *Alaafin* had invited them was a mere ruse to do them in. After all, was it not the *Alaafin* who had extended material assistance to the Ibadan war efforts? Instead of falling into the suspected trap, the Ekitiparapo therefore sent a small group of armed men to carry out a surprise attack on the unsuspecting Ibadan chiefs who had arrived at the battlefield site of the meeting. The Ibadan were only lucky to escape alive.

This again gave rise to the serious suspicion that the *Alaafin* was at it again—a game in which he was a virtuoso—except that it was probably more treacherous this time. Why was the *Alaafin* doing this? Could he have been misunderstood? Or, was he just a victim of circumstantial evidence in his failed attempts to secure peace? It would seem that *Alaafin's* diplomacy was a matter of enlightened self-interest. Most of the frantic steps he was taking during this period could be said to have sinister motives, but it must be borne in mind that deep down in his heart all along was the desire to see the Ibadan humbled so that the real terror they constituted might be removed. That was deemed to be the only way peace could be re-established in the whole Yoruba country. That feeling dominated the *Alaafin's* thinking and informed his strategies until the peace of 1886 was accomplished.<sup>25</sup> This was a major factor that prolonged the war and accounted for the tugging peace process.

But the other side was also guilty of impeding the move towards reconciliation. The Ekitiparapo Society in Lagos contributed in no small measure to the recalcitrant attitude of the Confederate leaders. First, it was the members of the society who made it possible for the Ekitiparapo to obtain the more advanced and far more effective weapons of war. Often, they served as counsellors and even envoys such as when Meffre and Haastrop were sent by the Lt.-Governor W.G. Griffith to the Ekitiparapo in January 1882 to invite their representatives to Lagos for negotiations. Through their many services to the Confederate cause, they had come to symbolise the source of inspiration, confidence and a high degree of implacability. They contributed to the recking of the peace talks in 1882.

There appeared to be no indigenous power that could effect reconciliation and bring about the much-desired peace. Each had something at stake in the struggle for power and mastery in the Yoruba country. The missionaries came into the scene in 1884–1885 and engaged the belligerents in discussions which they hoped would lead to the termination of hostilities. With their enhanced superiority, the Ekitiparapo proved to be unyielding in their demands.

It was their contention that for any settlement to be meaningful, it had to include the Egba, Ijebu, Ife and the Ilorin who were also directly involved in the war. They also demanded the recognition by Ibadan of the independence of the Ekitiparapo peoples. They asked that the four border towns of Otan, Iresi, Ada and Igbajo be returned to the Ijesa. They advocated an understanding which would prohibit future "hostile incursions into each other's territory." They further called for the restoration of the exiled *Awujale*, the restoration of the Ife to their town, the recognition of Ilorin's "possession" of Offa, and the removal of the Modakeke from Ife territory. They finally asked that Rev. Wood should supervise the dispersal of the two armies from their respective camps on a date to be agreed upon by the two belligerents.

This was the first time specific demands were made by the Ekitiparapo as basis for reconciliation with the Ibadan. In all, agreement was reached on all but two of these points. The Ibadan argued that Offa was a Yoruba town and therefore Ilorin's claim could not be recognised. The negotiations foundered on the question of the modalities for dispersing the troops. In spite of the missionary intervention, the negotiations of 1884–85 could not achieve much because of the profound distrust that existed between the two groups.<sup>26</sup>

The intransigence of the *Mogajis* (the *aremo* or first sons of the leading chiefs) also contributed to the failure of the missionary efforts. The *Mogajis* were especially critical of Latosisa's seeming accommodating positions in the negotiations. They contended that the Aare was compromising too much and was willing to give anything, including selling Ibadan, to achieve peace so that he might return home. For fear that he might lose control, the Aare had to accept the views of the younger Ibadan nationalists who vowed to continue the fight until the enemies of Ibadan were crushed. Fighting ensued following the departure of Rev. Wood who left the camps after negotiations had collapsed.

Two developments appeared to have helped to enhance their decision to press on. First, the Oru market was now open to the Ibadan and they could therefore obtain arms and ammunition. The second was the acquisition of Sniders from a Lagos businessman between late 1884 and early 1885. These developments gave the Ibadan greater confidence and were not prepared to negotiate with the Ekitiparapo. The Ibadan war chiefs expected that victory was just around the corner.<sup>27</sup>

The failure of several attempts by Yoruba powers as well as outsiders to effect reconciliation and restore peace in the Yoruba country reflected the prevailing political realities and diplomatic limitations. In the first place, there was not a single power in Yorubaland with enough power and influence to mediate which did not have an issue at stake in the war. The fear of the power and imperial ambitions of Ibadan were the common factors that united most Yoruba states against Ibadan. The consequence was that most of them did not want peace restored without the guarantee of their own interests. Second, the missionaries and the Lagos administration<sup>28</sup> also failed to settle the war because of their limited appreciation of the issues involved and because they did not provide the necessary force to sustain a peace settlement.<sup>29</sup> The occasion called for the intervention of a power with enough military muscle to back up any settlement that was finally reached. Such a power needed to enjoy a high level of acceptability among the warring parties for its decisions to be respected.

The British government was the only power that enjoyed these qualities, but it must now abandon its policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the interior of Lagos. It would seem that pressure had been mounting on both the Lagos administration and the Colonial Office to take on more positive responsibilities towards the interior because of its economic importance to Lagos. The war, no doubt, if left to continue, would adversely affect the commercial interests of Lagos. The Lagos government did not involve itself with the interior from 1882 to 1885. Pressure was, however, mounting and before the end of the latter year, Lagos administration was ready to entertain appeals for intervention but only if such requests were clear, convincing and without conditions and came from all the warring parties.<sup>30</sup>

As it turned out, a succession of developments beginning from the middle of 1885



created the conducive atmosphere for the cessation of hostilities and the conclusion of a peace agreement. The convergence of these developments was enough to create the momentum which the Lagos government did not fail to recognise and utilise.

By the close of 1885, the two groups — the Ibadan and the Ekitiparapo — had become weary of the war. The latter realised that the desire to score a final victory over the Ibadan was not, in the prevailing circumstances, attainable even though they could continue to keep up the resistance. The enthusiasm for continuing the war until the enemy was vanquished could no longer be entertained in the Ibadan camp because their supply of arms and ammunition had dried up. The mood was therefore auspicious for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.<sup>31</sup>

The death of the celebrated leader and commander of the Ibadan forces and the man who had, by his personality and ambitions, dominated the stage for a long time, Aare Latosisa, occurred in the Ibadan camp at the Kiriji front on August 31, 1885. Earlier in June, the exiled *Awujale* died at Epe, creating the opportunity for a new one to be installed by the powerful Onafowokan group. The importance of these deaths is that, the death of the former removed the major source of the universal fear and suspicion of the Ibadan which had impeded the efforts to terminate the war. The death of the latter removed what might have constituted a sore issue in peace negotiations which the anti-*Awujale* and pro-*Awujale* forces might have exploited.<sup>32</sup>

As 1885 rolled into 1886, the policy of non-intervention was no longer tenable, especially in the face of a nascent Anglo-French rivalry in West Africa. The task of transforming the policy of non-intervention fell on the Administrator of Lagos, Captain C.A. Moloney, who, having worked in Lagos before, was quite familiar with the imperatives of colonial administration in the interior of Lagos. He appeared to be up to the task.<sup>33</sup>

One of the first things the Lagos administration did early in 1886 was to send two C.M.S. missionaries as emissaries to the Ibadan and Ekitiparapo camps. The two Yoruba churchmen, Rev. Samuel Johnson and Rev. Charles Phillips visited the war fronts and major towns in the Yoruba country, and returned to Lagos in May with the representatives of the belligerent parties each with plenipotentiary powers to negotiate peace terms. The Lagos administration served as the midwife for the negotiations, and the peace terms jointly agreed upon on May 31 were a reflection of the prevailing desire for peace and the cooperation of the negotiating parties. The following terms were later included in the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Commerce of 1886.<sup>34</sup>

1. The members of the Ekitiparapo to retain their independence.
2. The contending parties to respect the territorial integrity of one another in the future.
3. The *Alaafin* to occupy the same position to the *Owa* of Ilesa as he had occupied before the war — that of an elder to a younger brother.
4. The boundaries between the Ekitiparapo and the Ibadan to remain as they stood at the time of agreement; as to the towns of Otan-Aiyegbaju, Iresi, Ada and Igbajo, those inhabitants who wanted to live with their Ekiti and Ijesa kinsmen could migrate, but the towns to remain in the possession of Ibadan.
5. The Offa issue to be settled later.
6. The Modakeke to leave Ife territory, migrate across the River Osun and resettle on Ibadan territory between the Osun and Oba Rivers; those of them who wished



to live with the Ife to move into Ile-Ife.

7. The Ijebu and the Ibadan to sign a treaty of peace, and the Ijebu to decamp from Modakeke and go home.

It is important to note that the Ilorin and the Egba did not participate in the negotiations: the former refused but the latter were not invited perhaps because the Egba phase of the war had by that time ceased to be of any great moment. Objections were raised to some aspects of the Treaty. The transfer of the four border towns to Ibadan irked the Ekitiparapo; the Modakeke did not like the clause that demanded their removal from their town to another site. These objections were raised when Johnson and Phillips were going round between June and July to obtain the signatures of the respective traditional rulers and chiefs to the peace treaty. In the end, however, all the parties subscribed to the peace settlement and signed the document.<sup>35</sup>

To implement the various terms of the Treaty, the Lagos administration sent out a Special Commission led by Mr. H. Higgins, the Acting Colonial Secretary. He was accompanied by other officials who were assigned special roles. Loaded with gifts to the interior chieftains and provided with heavy security amidst pomp and pageantry, the Commissioners arrived at the Kiriji War front and were housed in tents erected on the battlefield. In a pavilion erected for this momentous occasion, the Commission formally proclaimed peace on September 23, 1886.

It was a grand occasion. All the representatives of the warring parties were present except the Egba and the Ilorin. The leaders of the chief protagonists — Ajayi Osungbekun, the *Balogun* of Ibadan, and Ogedengbe, the Commander-in-Chief of the Ekitiparapo forces — publicly swore before the assemblage of representatives of former opposing groups and a teeming crowd that they and their peoples would now be one in peace and friendship. After the Chief Commissioner had read the Governor's Proclamation, the Treaty and the Ratification, all of which had been translated into Yoruba, the signatories to the Treaty then affixed their marks and seals to the Ratification. The playing of bugles and a seven-gun salute brought the ceremony to a close and inaugurated an era of peace after years of hostilities.

Between the 23rd when the peace was signed and the 27th when the two camps were completely evacuated and burnt down, hostages were exchanged. A climate of peace seemed to have descended on all and no one was ready to be accused of being the disturber of the peace. The presence of the Commissioners and the power they represented appeared to have been the decisive factor which assured correct behaviour and lack of any development in the Kiriji front.

So much hope had been placed on the settlement of the Kiriji-Ekitiparapo War that it must have been a disappointment to the Commissioners that matters remained intractable on the Modakeke-Ife front, the Ibadan-Ilorin front and the Ijebu front. The Ibadan-Ilorin War was not actually part of the Ibadan-Ekitiparapo War; it was a long-standing conflict between the two belligerents for hegemony in Yorubaland. The refusal by Ibadan to concede Offa to the Fulani dynasty of Ilorin accounted for the prolongation of the war there beyond the Treaty of 1886.

The Ijebu War could not be resolved by the Commissioners; its resolution had to wait until the Ibadan and the Ekitiparapo withdrew their forces from Modakeke towards the end of 1886. The withdrawal of troops rendered *Seriki* Ogunsigun's continued stay at Modakeke no longer justifiable; and in spite of his fear that he might not be welcomed

back home by the sympathisers of the new *Awujale*, he had to withdraw only to set up his new camp just outside the Ife territory. The reconciliation of the opposing Ijebu factions represented by Ogunsigun and Onafowokan forces had to be effected eventually for the peace and harmony of Ijebuland.<sup>36</sup>

It was not at all easy for the Ibadan and Ekitiparapo to withdraw from the Ife-Modakeke front. The issues involved were far more complex than in the other areas and the Treaty clause regarding the evacuation of the Modakeke to an area outside Ife territory.<sup>37</sup> All efforts by the Commissioners and the sympathetic diplomacy of Fabunmi, the commander of the Ekitiparapo forces against Modakeke, could not persuade them to comply with the Treaty clause. They argued that their town could not be compared with the Kiriji military camps which, by their nature and purpose, were temporary; whereas, they had settled in their town for several generations developing their institutions and traditions. They expressed serious misgivings about moving to the prescribed site of the present Ode-Omu.

Failure to make any headway forced the Commissioners to leave the Modakeke problem hoping that Fabunmi's proven ability and statemanship would not only prevent renewal of hostilities but might, perhaps, even find a solution to the vexed question.

The Modakeke did not just begin to be obdurate at the implementation stage of the Treaty, they had indeed strongly objected to the evacuation clause all along. However, they 'signed' the Treaty then only reluctantly to avoid being held responsible for the breakdown of the peace moves. It was, however, discovered eight years later in 1894, that the Modakeke did not actually endorse the Treaty but had merely put false marks to it.<sup>38</sup> The Ibadan, Ekitiparapo and Ijebu forces were withdrawn, from the Modakeke front towards the close of 1886 and the beginning of the new year, thanks to the fruitful efforts of Fabunmi to prevent the resumption of war there.<sup>39</sup> Thus the impasse in the Ife-Modakeke negotiations left the Modakeke issue unresolved.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps, that issue could, with a little more patience and resourcefulness on the part of the Commissioners, have been solved. The Commissioners represented the Lagos administration, the British colonial interest, which had access to the British military resources, power and prestige. Already the Lagos government enjoyed great credibility and respectability among the Yoruba states, and that was why it was able to successfully negotiate the peace of 1886 in the first place. With a powerful and influential third party like the Lagos administration, greater pressure on the Ife and the Modakeke might have perhaps thrown up a more workable solution than the apparently impossible option of evacuation of a town not conquered in war. The unduly hasty method of execution of the terms of the Treaty and the indefinite solution of the conflict left the Ife-Modakeke community a legacy of uneasy peace.

## Notes and References

1. Smith S., "To the Palaver Islands: War and Diplomacy on the Lagos Lagoon in 1852–1854," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 5 (i) December 1969, p.4, fn. 1.
2. Renouvir P. and J-P. Duroselle, *Introduction to the History of International Relations* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of our Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 222; see especially pp. 220–229 for a concise treatment of this issue from which this essay has benefited.
3. The fear of a possible Ibadan domination of the entire Yorubaland if not effectively resisted or checked is well expressed by the Owa of Ilesha at Ijebu-Ere on 12th June, 1881; See the enclosure in Rowe to Kimberley, 14th March, 1882, in C.O. 147/48.
4. Martin's Report of his Mission to Abeokuta, 10th November, 1879, enclosure in Moloney to Usher, 19th November, 1879 C.O. 147/48.
5. Akintoye S.A., *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland 1840–1893: Ibadan Expansion and the Rise of Ekitiparapo* (London: Longman, 1971), p.157. The revolt was principally caused by the economic pressure caused by the closure of Ijebu roads to the hinterland. The Awujale had to flee into exile to Epe.
6. Johnson Samuel, *The History of the Yorubas* (Lagos: CMS, 1921), pp. 427–439.
7. Akintoye S.A., *Revolution and Power Politics...*, pp. 91, 102–103. Fabunmi gave up the leadership of the Confederate army in 1880 in favour of Ogedengbe who finally accepted to join the Ekitiparapo forces.
8. C.M.S. (Y) 4/1/8, Wood's 1884 Notes.
9. C.O. 147/48, Rowe to Kimberley, 15 April, 1882. His perception of the Ibadan as great warriors would not let him appreciate early intervention by the British. For him, it was fight to finish.
10. C.O. 147/53, Latosisa to Barrow, 6th December, 1884, enclosure in Barrow to Young, 26th December, 1884.
11. Ammunition was not allowed as an article of trade; inspections were rigorously carried out to see that the prohibition was not undermined.
12. Akintoye, S.A., *Revolution and Power Politics...*, pp. 122–23.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 125
14. C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/5, Johnson to Governor-in-chief, 1st April, 1882.
15. C.M.S. (Y) 4/1/8, Wood's 1884 notes; C.O. 147/53, Latosisa to Barrow, 6th December, 1884.
16. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, p. 461.
17. C. 4957, the Ekitiparapo kings to Governor of Lagos, 9th June, 1884, enclosure in Young to Derby, 10th January, 1885.
18. C.O. 147/48, Rowe to Kimberley, 15th April, 1882. The British intervention in 1881–82 and the prospect for success was so unthinkable for the Aare that he caused an encounter with the Ekitiparapo in January 1882 after exhorting the Ibadan that they should "retrieve the character of the Ibadans" instead of seeking the "assistance of the whiteman to make peace."
19. Akintoye, S.A., *Revolution and Power Politics...*, p. 131.
20. C.O. 147/39, Maser to Moloney, 29th September, 1879, enclosure in [Governor]



Usher to Hicks-Beach, 30th September, 1879, Usher to Hicks-Beach, 24th October, 1879, especially, enclosures in Moloney to Usher, 19th November, 1879.

21. C.O. 147/46, *Alaafin* to Griffith, 15th October, 1881; C.O. 147/48, Rowe to Kimberley, 15th April, 1882. The *Alaafin* also used the services of the C.M.S. agents to get the peace process moving, especially to convince the Lagos government that their intervention was necessary to end the war. See C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/5, *Alaafin* to Wood, 15th October, 1881; Johnson to Griffith, 23rd January, 1882.
22. C.O. 147/39 Moloney to Usher, 19th November, 1879.
23. C.M.S., G3A2/01, Allen's Journal extracts for half-year ending December 1880.
24. C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/5, Meffre's Report of his mission to Imesi-Ile, January-February, 1882. Mr. P.J. Meffre was a prominent member of the Ekitiparapo in Lagos. He was, along with Mr. Joseph Haastrup, sent by the Lt.-Governor of Lagos in January 1882 to the Ekitiparapo authorities to arrange for a negotiated peace. See also C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/5, Johnson to Griffith, 23rd January, 1882.
25. While the *Alaafin* was virtually in a class by himself in his deft diplomatic performance, other Yoruba leaders did share his fears about the Ibadan. Chief Aderin, the *Ooni*-elect is a good example. The *Alaafin*'s mediatory roles lacked enthusiasm and genuine desire to get the Ibadan off the hook. C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/5, Johnson to Griffith, 23rd January, 1882; C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/6, Wood to Lang, 19th August, 1885.
26. C.M.S. (Y) 4/1/8, Wood's 1884 Notes.
27. C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/6, Wood to Lang, 19th August, 1885.
28. The Lagos administration enjoyed wide respectability and acceptability but failed to show enough concern for the goings-on in the interior of Lagos up till 1885, and certainly, did not want to get involved. A change in this attitude would make the colonial administration the right candidate for effective intervention. A convergence of events would cause a change of the policy of non-intervention in 1885-1886.
29. The representatives of the *Sultan* of Sokoto and the *Emirs* of Bida and Gwandu only succeeded to arrange an Ibadan-Ilorin truce at Offa for only five months and the exchange of important prisoners, but failed to reconcile the Ibadan and the Ekitiparapo at the Kiriji front in 1883. The Ilorin dynasty's northern connection undermined the credibility of the Fulani envoys.
30. C.O. 147/54 Evans to Griffith, 19th May 1885.
31. C.4957, Phillip's Report of the Second Mission, 1886, enclosure in Evans to Granville, 24th August, 1886.
32. C.O. 147/54, Evans to Griffith, 19th May 1885; C.O. 147/56, Moloney to Colonial Secretary, 10th March, 1886.
33. C.4957, Phillip's and Johnson's Reports of their First Missions, 1886, enclosures in Moloney to Granville, 23rd June, 1886.
34. C. 4957, Minutes of Joint Interview between the interior delegates on 31st May, 1886 at Lagos, enclosure in Moloney to Granville, 23rd June, 1886.
35. C.4957, Report of the Special Commissioners, enclosures in Evans to Stanhope. 10th February, 1887; also Higgins to Colonial Office, 20th June, 1887.



36. C.5114, *Further Correspondence Respecting War Between Native Tribes in the Interior of Lagos*, Johnson to Archdeacon Hamilton, 23rd January, 1887.
37. For a fuller discussion of the issues, see Olaniyan, R.A., "Modakeke in Ife politics and diplomacy," in I.A. Akinjogbin, ed. *The Cradle of a Race: Ife, from the Earliest times to to 1980*. P.Harcourt Sunray 1994.
38. Akintoye S.A., *Revolution and Power Politics...*, p. 181.
39. C. 5114, Johnson to Hamilton, 23rd January, 1887; C. 5114, Johnson to Archdeacon Hamilton, 23rd January, 1887. It is interesting to note that the Ibadan forces withdrawn from Modakeke were encamped at Osogbo under the leadership of Chief Akintola. They were later to be used to reinforce the Ibadan forces stationed at Ikirun.
40. C. 5114, Memo on repudiation of Treaty by the Modakeke, enclosure in Evans to Stanhope, 17th November, 1886; also telegram Evans to Colonial Secretary, 23rd January, 1887.

## Chapter Twenty Four

# The British and the 1877-93 War in Yorubaland

S.A. Akintoye

An attempt is made in this chapter to examine British intervention in the war fought between 1877 and 1893 by the Yoruba states of the Lagos hinterland. The beginning of British interest, and involvements, in the 19th century Yoruba wars dates from the time when Lagos became a British colony in 1861.<sup>1</sup> In the 1877-93 War, as in the earlier wars, the question of motivation of British intervention is naturally a complex question. Oft-expressed concern for the welfare of the Yoruba themselves cannot be simply discountenanced. But the dominant theme was the protection and promotion of British commercial interests. The aim was a financially self-sufficient Lagos colony serving as the part for a smoothly flowing trade with a hinterland free of disturbances. This accounts for the basic directions assumed by the actions of British officials about the war.

On Monday, the 30th of July 1877, before an assembly of Ibadan people, Chief Momoh Latoosa, the *Are-Ona-Kakanfo* of Ibadan, declared war on the Egba. Next day, the Ibadan forces, under Latoosa, marched out towards the Egba territory<sup>2</sup>. This was the beginning of a war which Latoosa hoped would end by completing the unification of practically the whole Yoruba country under Ibadan.

By 1865<sup>3</sup>, Ibadan had proved the most successful of all the successor states of the Old Oyo Empire. By 1877, Ibadan ruled the whole of the Oyo country except a small area reluctantly conceded to the *Alaafin*, the whole of Oshun up to the gates of Offa (the town marking the southernmost limit of Ilorin's power)<sup>4</sup>, and the whole of the Ife, Ijesha, Ekiti, Akoko and Igbomina countries. Of the remaining parts, the most desirable to Ibadan, and yet the most difficult to subdue, were the Egba and Ijebu territories. These lay south of Ibadan, controlling the trade routes to the Guinea Coast where imported goods like textiles, salt, guns and gun-powder could be procured in exchange for palm oil, kernel, home-made cloths and other products of the Yoruba country. The failure of the Ibadan to control these routes or to persuade the Egba and Ijebu to permit free access through them was therefore crucial. In 1877, Latoosa believed the time had come to solve the problem.

From the very start, however, developments contradicted Latoosa's hopes. The Ijebu, whom he had hoped to keep neutral while he crushed the Egba, refused to be deceived and soon joined the Egba in hostilities against Ibadan.<sup>5</sup> Also, Latoosa had believed that the Ekiti, Ijesa, Akoko, and Igbomina countries had been so well subdued that no troubles could be expected from there. But early in 1878, the people of these areas, taking advantage of Ibadan's preoccupation with the Egba and Ijebu, bound

themselves together in a grand confederacy which they called Ekitiparapo and whose aim was to free themselves from Ibadan domination or even to destroy Ibadan's power totally. In due course, Ilorin went into alliance with the Ekitiparapo. In 1882, the Ife, who had hitherto been forced to contribute to Ibadan's war effort, revolted and declared for the Ekitiparapo.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, almost all the leading states in the country were involved in the war. Of the rest, the *Alaafin*, whose rump kingdom was inset in the Ibadan empire<sup>7</sup>, found himself caught in a whirlwind and having to cast frantically about to extricate himself. Things were to remain more or less like this until 1893.

Essentially, the Lagos officials preferred that the Yoruba should settle their disputes by themselves, and British intervention was made necessary by their failure to do so. For, as soon as the war began, attempts were made from various Yoruba quarters to restore peace. In fact, the first peace moves were made by the Ibadan themselves in an attempt to reach a settlement first with the Ijebu, and then the Egba<sup>8</sup>. In 1881, strong moves were initiated separately by the *Alaafin* and Chief Aderin, the *Ooni*-elect of Ife. In fact, Chief Aderin's envoys got the Ibadan and Ekitiparapo to agree on all issues at stake—with the exception of the method of decamping.<sup>9</sup>

The failure of these indigenous initiatives was due to the fact that practically every Yoruba power had an interest in the outcome of the war and there was general distrust among the powers. Moves by Ibadan were seen by all as Ibadan's usual strategy of divide to conquer<sup>10</sup>. The *Alaafin* was neither respected nor trusted by the Ibadan. The *Alaafin*, while speaking out for peace in the open, was like Chief Aderin, working behind the scenes to ensure that the Ibadan, who 'made him feel a king only in name', should, at least, be humbled<sup>11</sup>. The *Awujale* of Ijebu warned that the other Yoruba states must now at least stick together and pull Ibadan down, otherwise the Ibadan would make themselves 'masters of the whole world'.<sup>12</sup> The Egba shared this view<sup>13</sup>. The Ekitiparapo and Ilorin, having done much better than they had hoped by checking the Ibadan forces in the first few months, were bent on complete victory<sup>14</sup>. For their part, the Ibadan, though facing a stiffer test than any other in their history, continued to believe that a change of fortune would come and tried to bring it about by diplomatic manoeuvres among their enemies<sup>15</sup>. Ibadan's ambition to unify and dominate the whole country, her long rivalry with Ilorin, the *Alaafin*'s ambition to revive the ancient glory of the *Alaafins*, the resistance of the Egba and Ijebu to Ibadan expansionism, the determination of the groups already subdued by Ibadan to free themselves – all these and more were involved in this war. In short, for most Yoruba states, this was a war to end all wars.

Consequently, many Yoruba leaders conceded from the beginning that only a great foreign power could restore the peace. After his near-successful peace mission of 1881, Chief Aderin expressed the conviction that what was needed was a foreign power with the military might to separate the Ibadan and Ekitiparapo and to ensure compliance with peace terms in the future, and suggested that the only power which answered this description was the British government of Lagos<sup>16</sup>.

The Lagos government had therefore begun to intervene not long after the outbreak of war. However, British policy towards Lagos, especially since the Select Committee of 1865, enjoined on the local officials the furtherance of British commerce with the interior without involving Britain in the expense, either of military action, or of new

political responsibilities beyond the colony. Glover, who had been Administrator of Lagos c.1862-c.72, had, by pursuing an aggressive and expensive policy towards the interior, called forth sharp Colonial Office reaction – manifesting itself in condemnation and virtual recall of Glover himself and the tightening of control on Lagos<sup>17</sup>. Thereafter, Lagos officials had generally acted with much greater caution, particularly avoiding steps which might bring a rebuff from any Yoruba state and therefore make the employment of force necessary.

Consistent with policy, the Colonial Office hastened to instruct its officials in October 1878 (i.e. soon after the war became country-wide) to "maintain an attitude of perfect neutrality and commit no act of partisan character."<sup>18</sup> But the trade and revenue of the colony, which had in 1875-77 recovered from the effects of Glover's administration, soon began to feel the effects of the interior troubles and the consequent closure of the Egba and Ijebu trade routes. From £734,707 in 1877, the value of exports fell to £577,336 in 1878, imports from £614,359 to £483,623, and revenue from £59,389 to £50,389. In 1879, there was some revival but in 1880, exports fell to £576,510, imports to £407,369, and revenue £47,987. After this, the depression continued until 1892, the worst year being 1881 and 1882. The 1881 figures were £460,007 for exports, £333,659 for imports and £42,421 for revenue.<sup>19</sup>

The Lagos officials, therefore, could only see the war in terms of British economic interests in Lagos. Since trade was their main concern, they claimed that the struggle over the trade routes between the Egba-Ijebu allies on the one hand and the Ibadan on the other was the important issue in the war, that the Ekiti, Ijesa and others merely were partisans of the former party, and that a settlement of the disputes over the trade routes would restore peace in all the country.<sup>20</sup>

In 1879, therefore, Governor Usher sent envoys to Ijebu and Egba to ascertain their readiness to accept British mediation<sup>21</sup>. The reports of these envoys showed that hardly anything short of complete destruction of Ibadan would satisfy the Egba and Ijebu. In fact, the dominant party in Abeokuta demanded that Ibadan should be broken up and the area it occupied be turned into neutral zone.<sup>22</sup>

This was as much as telling Usher, as they had told Glover during the Ijaye War (1860-65), to mind his business. However, in 1880, acting on communication from a party in Abeokuta (the peace party led by influential Chief Ogundipe),<sup>23</sup> Captain C.A. Moloney, the Administrator of Lagos, sent Mr. Tickel, the Government Political Agent, to Abeokuta and thus demonstrated clearly that they would not brook British interference.<sup>24</sup>

Such strong anti-British feelings among the Egba were partly the legacy of Glover's pro-Ibadan policy.<sup>25</sup> Both the Egba and Ijebu had been, since Glover, used to thinking of the British as allies of Ibadan, and had frequently reacted by refusing passage to Lagos officials and traders through their country. The interest shown by the Lagos government in the war in 1879-80 was therefore viewed with grave suspicion by the Egba and Ijebu. Moreover, the Lagos moves did not only coincide in time with approaches being made by the Ibadan towards the Egba and Ijebu, but also took the same lines and, therefore, appeared to Ibadan's adversaries to have the same objectives. Ibadan attempted to make peace with the Egba and Ijebu but not with the Ekitiparapo. It was therefore universally believed in the interior that Ibadan's aim was to secure the opening of the Egba and Ijebu roads to obtain arms and ammunition to crush the



Ekitiparapo and Ilorin, after which she could turn round to crush the Egba and Ijebu. By asking the Egba and Ijebu to make peace with Ibadan so that the roads might be opened, therefore, the Lagos government appeared not only to the Egba-Ijebu allies, but also to the Ekitiparapo, whom the Lagos government hardly knew anything about, to be playing Ibadan game. In this period, therefore, there was report of agents of the Ekitiparapo and Ilorin at Abeokuta and Ijebu-Ode, their mission being to prevent the Egba and Ijebu from falling prey to the machinations of the Ibadan and the Lagos government.<sup>26</sup> The end result was the growth of an alliance between the Ekitiparapo and Ilorin on the one hand and the Egba and Ijebu on the other.

As far as the Lagos government was concerned, the immediate outcome of the failure of the Tickel mission was to strengthen the policy of non-intervention in interior affairs. Until late 1881, nothing was again done in Lagos towards the restoration of peace in the interior.

From the beginning, however, the policy came under serious attack from merchants, smaller traders and missionary bodies. Vocal elements in Lagos itself and in Britain charged that the Lagos government, by doing nothing positive about the war in the interior, was shirking the most basic responsibilities of government to the governed, and ignoring the vital interests of Lagos. Newspapers spoke of "the badness of trade", 'universal depression' and 'unparalleled emergency', and lamented that 'the colony is at the present moment ... undergoing a dreadful torture'. The policy of the government was ridiculed as a policy of 'do nothing' or 'folded hands', and its officials as using 'non-intervention as a shield'.<sup>27</sup> It was also argued that the ineffectiveness of the Lagos administration was due to an arrangement whereby it was put under the control of the Governor of the Gold Coast at Accra. Public petitions and newspaper editorials therefore demanded immediate separation of Lagos from the Gold Coast.<sup>28</sup>

In view of such pressure and the steady decline in the revenue, the local British officials began to doubt the wisdom of the policy towards the war. In January 1881, E.H. Hewett, H.M. Consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra, who had visited Ondo the previous December, told Administrator Moloney that it was time the Lagos government began to do something about the interior situation.<sup>29</sup> In May, Moloney, in a despatch<sup>30</sup> to Governor Samuel Rowe at Accra, put perhaps the strongest case against the government's policy. The original aim of the British in occupying Lagos, he reminded Rowe, was "to assist, defend and protect the inhabitants, to put an end to the slave trade, not only here but in the neighbouring countries, and to prevent the destructive wars so frequently undertaken". Though the British had done much for the Lagos Colony, he pointed out, wars and raids still occurred in the neighbouring territories, and they were detrimental to the welfare of the states and peoples of the interior and to the prosperity of Lagos; and this unhappy situation was bound to continue as long as the Lagos government did nothing to stop the wars. By July 1881, Governor Rowe put it to the Colonial Secretary that "Her Majesty's Government has a direct interest in promoting peace in these (interior) land."<sup>31</sup>

But how was the Lagos government to promote peace in the interior? Some members of the public suggested that the government should send Residents into the interior states, or begin a policy of paying subsidies to the interior rulers.<sup>32</sup>

In January 1881, Hewett suggested that the war had gone on for so long and the belligerent parties had grown so tired that if the Lagos government should send a

messenger 'of tact, judgement and patience' to mediate, such a messenger would find no difficulty in getting all parties to come to terms.<sup>33</sup> Against this, Moloney answered that past experience had shown that the Yoruba states were usually intolerant of Lagos government's interference in their affairs. Therefore, until there were clear indications from the warring parties that they were willing to submit to British mediation, no messenger could be sent as proposed by Hewett, unless the government was ready to back such mediation with force.<sup>34</sup>

Then in May, Moloney put forth his own recommendations. Though the British Government had no means of getting the Yoruba states to accept its mediation, he said, it yet had a means of stopping the war in spite of them. The Imperial Government could prohibit the importation of war materials through all ports under British control on the West African coast, thereby withholding from the belligerents the means by which they fought.<sup>35</sup> This suggestion was not new, having been made at least twice in the previous decade.<sup>36</sup> And, as Moloney's superiors pointed out, it was unrealistic. First, since Britain did not control all the sea coasts or the Niger ports, prohibition in British ports could not prevent arms from reaching the interior. The effect would only be that while Ibadan's enemies could obtain arms through Ijebu and Mahin and the Niger ports, Ibadan would be effectively deprived. Second, even if a prohibition could be effectively imposed, there was yet no guarantee that war could end as the belligerents might resort to their traditional weapons - bows, arrows etc.<sup>37</sup>

In late 1881, the clear invitation to the Lagos government from the Yoruba rulers which the Lagos officials had eagerly expected, seemed at last to come. By then, Ibadan, out of desperation, had begun to threaten all and sundry (but especially the *Alaafin*, Chief Aderin and the Ondo) with dire penalties after the war for refusing to give active support to Ibadan.<sup>38</sup> To these states, it became more important than ever before to secure British intervention, as a British-guaranteed settlement appeared the best means of saving themselves from Ibadan's anger after the war. Moreover, the situation had become more complicated for the *Alaafin* by the fact that Dahomey had in May invaded the Upper Ogun district (which was still mostly under the *Alaafin*), and had threatened to come back in the dry season when they hoped to attack Oyo town. Refugees from the Upper Ogun flocked to Oyo and demanded that the *Alaafin* should do something to stop the Dahomey.<sup>39</sup> The *Alaafin* decided that the solution was to invite the British to restore peace in the country and save it from Dahomey raids.

It was, however, Chief Aderin who acted first. On October 9, Reverend Olubi, C.M.S. missionary at Ibadan, received a message from Aderin (who thought that Olubi was 'the whiteman's representative in these parts') asking for his (Olubi's) permission to further intervene in the war.<sup>40</sup> Apparently, what he wanted was for the Lagos government to back him with men and soldiers so that he could go back to the war front and finish the work he had almost completed recently. Later on the same day, Rev. Olubi received a message from the *Alaafin* inviting him to come to Oyo on the 13th for an interview.<sup>41</sup> The result of this interview was the letter written by the *Alaafin* to Lt. Governor Griffith appealing to him to intervene to restore peace in the interior and help in saving the country from Dahomey's menace.<sup>42</sup>

The Lagos government jumped at the opportunity thus offered. In January 1882, after the *Alaafin*'s letter had been cleared as authentic,<sup>43</sup> Griffith sent his own agents to invite all the interior states to send representatives for peace talks under the auspices

of the Lagos government in Lagos.<sup>44</sup> Envoys of the *Alaafin*, the Ibadan, the Ekitiparapo and the Ondo came to Lagos. The Governor, Sir Samuel Rowe, came from Accra for the talks which went on till early April.<sup>45</sup>

The peace talks broke down when the Ekitiparapo, who since early 1881 had established some superiority over the Ibadan, demanded from the Lagos government a guarantee which that government could not give. The Ekitiparapo envoys announced that the principals would agree to peace only on condition that the Lagos government would undertake to use its power to ensure that Ibadan would never again attack themselves, the Egba, the Ijebu, the *Alaafin*, the Ife or any other state in the interior<sup>46</sup>.

The Lagos officials put the failure of these negotiations down to the evil influences of some sections of the Lagos emigrant community on the interior delegates. The patriotism of these 'Lagos men' towards their own tribes in the interior was often misinterpreted by the British as merely a weapon for promoting their trade among the interior peoples.<sup>47</sup> In 1881, Rev. Wood (C.M.S.) claimed that their evil advice to the Yoruba rulers had caused, and was sustaining, the present war, and that in their advice they were motivated by the profits which they derived from selling arms and ammunition to the interior.<sup>48</sup> So, those of Ekiti, Ijesa and Oyo origin among the emigrants were especially held responsible for the 1882 failure.<sup>49</sup>

The influence of these people was felt at every stage of the peace talks, but it was not used against arriving at a settlement as such. The Oyo elements were shocked at the *Alaafin's* suing for British intervention, as this would mean an admission by the Oyo (i.e. Ibadan) side in the war of weakness or defeat, a thing regarded as an abomination among the Yoruba.<sup>50</sup> The Ekiti-Ijesa elements, who had been helping the Ekitiparapo from the beginning, were confident that victory was near in any case; they would gladly welcome a peaceful settlement, but held that if a near-victor was to give up a war in the interest of peace, then the mediator owed him convincing guarantees for his future security.<sup>51</sup>

There is no case here of men sacrificing their own people for commercial profits. For instance, the Ekiti and Ijesa elements, who appear to have been mostly non-traders, had for three decades shown concern at the Ibadan conquest of their peoples. They had been largely responsible for inspiring the formation of the Ekitiparapo and throughout the war they levied taxes on themselves to buy arms for, while volunteers among them fought in, the Ekitiparapo army. The fact that some traders among them did a good business selling arms and ammunition to the Ekitiparapo must be seen vis-a-vis with this.

The real explanation then seems to be, first, that the main belligerent parties were clearly not as tired as was supposed. Even Latoosa, whose envoys appeared most in favour of peace in Lagos, was at the same time urging the Ibadan chiefs in the camp to make a final effort to win the war before the talks in Lagos could reach a conclusion.<sup>52</sup> Second, as Chief Aderin had said before the talks began, what was needed was not more talking but a mediator with the power of the Lagos government who also had the will to use its power to back its prestige and assure the warring parties that treachery was impossible from either side.<sup>53</sup>

The failure of these early 1882 moves were to put an end to the Lagos government's intervention for quite a long time, as it showed that, to be effective in its mediation, the government would have to accept responsibilities beyond its instructions. However,



the effects of the war were too important to be ignored, and when some of the leading men in the Lagos community got together in December 1882 with the intention to intervene, Moloney gladly encouraged them - hoping, apparently, that this might lead to new appeals from the interior for British mediation.<sup>54</sup> A mission sent by these people and led by Chief Ajasa, the *Apena* of Lagos, went to see the *Awujale* in order to persuade him, as one of the most respected rulers in the country, to employ his influence in the interest of peace. Unfortunately, the *Awujale* was then in difficulty with his subjects over the war policy - he insisting that the war must go on till the bitter end while the Ijebu leading warriors and traders demanded immediate withdrawal of Ijebu from the war.<sup>55</sup> Soon after Chief Ajasa's departure from Ijebu-Ode, the *Awujale* had to flee to exile at Epe. Consequently, the mission achieved nothing.

Moreover, Moloney's superiors received the news of the mission with disapproval, on the grounds that it was capable of involving the Lagos administration in far-reaching complications. Claiming that Moloney's encouragement of the Lagos people to interfere in the interior was akin to British involvement in the politics of some of the southern peoples of the Gold Coast which had led to wars with the Ashanti, Governor Rowe instructed him to "discourage such action... should any other such occasion arise".<sup>56</sup> To underline his point, Rowe refused Mr. Otunba Payne, an influential emigrant of Ijebu origin (but a British subject) permission to join a delegation of Ijebu people in Lagos to the *Awujale* at Epe. Moloney tried to defend his action, pointing out how inept Rowe's historical analogies were.<sup>57</sup> But in March, the Earl of Derby closed the matter with the warning that "no encouragement should be given to any interference on the part of the native residents at Lagos with the affairs of the chiefs in the interior".<sup>58</sup> Therefore, until 1885, the Lagos officials took no further step about the war, repeatedly answering criticisms of their inaction by the statement that they could do nothing unless there was "distinct and unconditional overture by all the parties to the war".<sup>59</sup>

From late 1885, however, important developments occurred, causing a change of policy in Lagos and generally favouring peace. The economic condition of the colony was becoming so desperate, and Anglo-French rivalry in West Africa so intense that a policy of non-intervention in the hinterland became patently untenable.<sup>60</sup> In 1886, Lagos was at last separated from Accra, with the result that officials in Lagos could act with a great deal more freedom and at the same time, Moloney, who was well informed about the affairs of the hinterland and had, during his earlier service in Lagos, shown an eagerness to do something about the war, became the leader of the Lagos administration.

Simultaneously, developments favourable to peace took place in the interior. On the 31st of August 1885, Chief Latoosa, the *Are-Ona-Kakanfo* of Ibadan, died in the Ibadan camp near Igbajo.<sup>61</sup> This was the man whose ambition had caused and mostly sustained the war and the man who many states had feared would attack them at the conclusion of the war. Among the remaining Ibadan leaders, the hope was dead of ultimate victory in the war. Among the Ekitiparapo, who still maintained some material superiority over the Ibadan, hopes of an eventual victory had been dashed by a brief recovery of Ibadan in late 1884 and early 1885.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, it was widely felt among Ibadan's enemies and the uncommitted state that, as none of the surviving Ibadan chiefs had the stature or the ambition of Latoosa, any settlement reached with them was more likely to be observed.

In 1886, therefore, the Lagos government, again seizing the opportunities of favourable



communication from Ibadan and Ekitiparapo, began moves which led to another meeting of representatives of the Yoruba states between May and June in Lagos and agreement on peace terms. These terms, brought together in a treaty entitled "Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Commerce"<sup>63</sup> stipulated that:

1. The members of the Ekitiparapo should henceforth be independent.
2. The contending parties should respect the territorial integrity of one another in the future
3. The *Alaafin* should occupy the same position to the *Owa* of Ilcsa as he had occupied before the war—that of an elder to a younger brother.
4. The boundaries between Ibadan and the Ekitiparapo should remain as they stood at the time of this agreement; as to the Ijesa towns of Otan, Iresi, Ada and Igbajo which thus remained under Ibadan, the inhabitants who wished to live with their Ijesa and Ekiti kinsmen should migrate across the border accordingly.
5. The Ilorin-Ibadan contest of Offa would be settled later.
6. The people of Modakeke (an Oyo refugee town outside Ile-Ife and an ally of Ibadan should leave Ife territory, migrate across the Rivers Osun and Oba into Oyo country); those of them who wished to live with the Ife should move into Ile-Ife.
7. The Ijebu and Ibadan would sign treaty of Peace, and the Ijebu would decamp from near Modakeke and go home.

In September, a Commission of the Lagos government led by the Acting Colonial Secretary, Henry Higgins, and accompanied by a force of 50 Hausas with a seven-pounder and appropriate small arms, brought the treaty to the interior.<sup>64</sup> On the 23rd, before an assembly of representatives of Ibadan, Ekitiparapo, Ife, Ijebu and the *Alaafin*, peace was proclaimed on the battlefield between the main Ibadan and Ekitiparapo camps on the hilly country between Imesi-Ile and Igbajo. The camps were then evacuated and burnt down.

The Lagos government had thus settled the greater part of the war. But peace was yet far from being restored and freedom of commerce established. The Ilorin had refused to take part in the negotiations or sign the treaty. Consequently, the Ibadan-Ilorin war continued around Offa, obliging the main Ibadan army from Igbajo to encamp at Ikirun near Offa to back up their forces there. But by not returning directly home, the Ibadan aroused strong suspicions among the Ekitiparapo who, therefore encamped inside Imesi-Ile to watch them.<sup>65</sup> On a number of occasions in the following years, it looked as if the Ekitiparapo were going to join the Ilorin in renewed attacks on the Ibadan.<sup>66</sup> Modakeke, a town just outside the Ile-Ife walls, with whose aid the Ibadan had sacked Ile-Ife in 1882, refused to comply with the treaty and move away from Ife's land. In reaction, the Ife refused to break up the siege of Modakeke.<sup>67</sup> The Egba's participation in actual armed combat had long thinned out, but they maintained the prohibition of trade in arms and ammunition with Ibadan. A lot of trade in peaceful goods was, however, going on between Abeokuta and the Ibadan territory and, through Iseyin, with Ilorin. But the route through Iseyin was in 1887-9 blockaded by the Ibadan on the allegation that the Egba were using it to sell arms to the Ilorin.<sup>68</sup> Since they exiled their ruler early in 1883, there had existed two antagonistic parties among the Ijebu leadership - the supporters of the exiled *Awujale* led by the *Seriki* Ogunsigun with his army encamped at Isoya in Ife territory near Ijebu-Igbo,<sup>69</sup> and the supporters of the

successful rebels led by the *Balogun* Onafowokan whose army was encamped at Oru.<sup>76</sup> Even though the exiled *Awujale* had died in 1885 and the dominant party had installed another *Awujale*, the wounds remained sore, with the result that the 1886 Commissioners failed to reconcile the parties, and two hostile Ijebu armies remained in existence after 1886.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, since early 1883 the Ijebu had allowed Ibadan traders to come to their northern town of Oru to trade; but they continued to prevent Lagos traders from travelling through their country to the interior and the Ibadan from going further south than Oru. In fact, in 1887, they tightened their grip on the roads.<sup>78</sup>

Pressure by commercial interests (especially the big commercial houses) and missionaries that the Lagos government should do some final thing about the interior therefore continued. The Lagos, Liverpool and Manchester Chambers of Commerce suggested arrangements which, in short, would have had the Lagos government send a strong army to the interior to stop all disturbances there, set up some permanent commission to maintain peace in the interior, and end the trade monopoly which, it was claimed, the Egba and Ijebu enjoyed.<sup>79</sup> The government continued also to be under the old pressure - the revenue of the Colony was suffering terribly.<sup>80</sup> Finally, French activities in the West and North of Lagos dictated greater changes in British policy towards the interior. For instance, in 1887, French agents visited Abeokuta and concluded a treaty with the Egba, empowering France to build a railway from Porto Novo to Abeokuta. It was also learnt that the French intended to enter into a treaty with the *Alaafin*. All indications pointed to a French plan to seize advantage of troubled situation of the Yoruba country to bring it within their own area of influence and divert its trade to French ports.

All these dictated changes in British policy if British interest were to be safeguarded. In the next five years, changes did occur, but still within the strategy of advancing economic interests without assuming expensive commitments. Until 1891, therefore, the Lagos government, under Capt. Moloney, engaged itself in two types of measures. In the first place, attempts were made to sign commercial treaties with Yoruba rulers. As these treaties were aimed at countering the French, they contained the general provision that the states entering into them would not cede their territories to, nor enter into any arrangement with, any other foreign power without the consent of the British. For this, the Yoruba ruler concerned was to receive annual stipends. Such a treaty was made with the *Alaafin* in 1888.<sup>81</sup>

Moloney was very enthusiastic about these treaties and expressed the belief that 'the conditions protect the interest of the Colony... against the diversions of trade beyond Lagos.'<sup>82</sup> Diversions of trade to the French did not occur indeed, but in no case did the treaties, in practical term, lead to any clear change of relationships nor to the improvement of trade between the British and the states which were regarded as having thus engaged themselves. Moreover, rulers were suspicious of the proffered stipends and unwilling to grant away their territories. Moloney's attempt to involve the Egba in such a treaty in 1888 failed.

Second, towards the states (Ilorin, Ibadan and Ekitiparapo) still encamped in the interior, Moloney continued the policy of sending envoys in order to persuade them to make peace. Acting on invitation from Ibadan and Ekitiparapo chiefs,<sup>83</sup> he tried in 1887 and 1888 to get peace fully restored. At first, his idea was that an appeal to Yoruba patriotism and nationalism would achieve this end. So, he advised the Ekitiparapo to

remember that the Ibadan were their kinsmen and their interests were nearer those of Ibadan than of the Fulani foreigners of Ilorin. Further, he suggested an arrangement whereby the Yoruba states would exchange ambassadors and set up institutions for settling disputes.<sup>78</sup>

When his efforts on such lines were unavailing, he again suggested (once more unsuccessfully) to the Colonial Office that a ban on arms importation through ports on the coast and the Niger estuary should be authorised, as this was sure to starve the Ibadan and Ilorin effectively of arms<sup>79</sup>. A Foreign Office mission under Major Macdonald of the Royal Niger Company to Ilorin in 1889 achieved nothing.<sup>80</sup> So did two missions sent from Lagos in 1890-91 - one under the Rev. Samuel Johnson of the C.M.S. to the *Alaafin*,<sup>81</sup> the other under Alvan Millson to the Ibadan and Ilorin.<sup>82</sup> A visit by the Acting Governor Denton in 1891 to Ijebu-Ode to discuss with the *Awujale* did not only fail to achieve any useful results but, because of the opposition of the Ijebu chiefs to any dealings with the British, produced incidents which the Lagos government interpreted as calculated insults on its chief official.<sup>83</sup>

In 1890, the French conquered and established a protectorate over Dahomey. This did not only greatly increase French threat to British influence in the interior, it also established an example for the British. The consequence was a radical change in British policy towards the Yoruba country, involving the employment of force and the acceptance of political responsibility in order 'to secure the safety of the roads.'<sup>84</sup> This set the stage for the vigorous expansionism of Gilbert T. Carter who became Governor of Lagos in the second half of 1891.

In 1892, Carter doubled the strength of the Lagos Hausa force from 250 to 500. Accusing the Ijebu of continuing to close the roads in defiance of a treaty which he claimed they had made with him,<sup>85</sup> Carter invaded the Ijebu country, crushed Ijebu resistance, established a garrison at Ijebu-Ode and annexed Ikorodu, Epe, Ejinrin, Ito-Ike and other towns controlling the Ijebu routes. The Egba peacefully opened their roads in order to avoid Ijebu's fate.

These developments in Ijebu and Egba changed the situation in the farther hinterland and made the Ilorin-Ibadan war easier to deal with. The story of the conquest of Ijebu was a universal lesson. Moreover, the fact that Ibadan could now freely trade with Lagos and buy arms and ammunition there, greatly tilted the scales in favour of Ibadan and inclined Ilorin to be more willing than before for a settlement.

Early in 1893, Carter set out for the interior with an escort of soldiers. At Abeokuta he made a treaty with the Egba guaranteeing the opening of the roads and obliging the Egba to refer disputes with British subjects for settlement by the Governor of Lagos. At Oyo, he made the *Alaafin* enter an agreement whereby the *Alaafin* undertook to avoid going to war and to refer to the Lagos government all disputes capable of leading to hostilities. On March 8, Carter brought the Ibadan, Ilorin and Ekitiparapo representatives together in a final peace conference on the bank of the River Oun near Ikirun. On the 14th, the Ibadan camp at Ikirun, the Ilorin camp at Offa and the Ekitiparapo camp at Imesi-Ile were evacuated and their inhabitants began to return to their respective homes.<sup>86</sup> In the second half of 1894, Carter made the Ife recognise that it was unrealistic to continue to ask that Modakeke should be broken up; he also got them to evacuate their encampment against Modakeke and return to their homes.<sup>87</sup> With the stationing of a Resident at Ibadan in 1893 and the establishment afterwards of military posts at



Oyo, Odo-Otin, Ogbomosho and Akure, 'pacification' of the Yoruba country was completed, and the foundations of British rule laid.

The ultimate outcome of British intervention in the war then was British conquest of the Yoruba country. Although British policy most of the time had insisted on avoidance of force and of territorial acquisitions, this outcome followed naturally from the fact that British concern in intervening was principally a peace which safeguarded their own economic interests. As Carter said in 1896, "the main object of our (British) presence in the Yoruba country (has been) to see that the trade routes were kept open and to stop the abominable practice of slave-raiding i.e. the wars) which had been an effectual bar to the proper development of its resources."<sup>8</sup> Until 1890, the idea was to achieve this end as cheaply as possible. But from then on, circumstances made military and political commitments compulsory.

## Notes and References

1. For the Lagos Government and the wars 1861-73, see McIntyre: W.D. "Commander Glover and the Colony of Lagos, 1861-73", *Journal of African History*, No. 4 Vol. 1, 1963, pp. 57-79.
2. Details from Oyebo's R.S. 1877 Diary, (Ibadan University Library). Entries for July. Rev. Oyebo was one of the C.M.S. Missionaries at Ibadan in 1877.
3. The date of Ibadan's destruction of Ijaye which, up till then, had been Ibadan's chief (and even stronger) rival.
4. After forcing the *Alaafin* to evacuate Old Oyo and large number of Oyo people to flee south, Ilorin continued to advance southwards. about 1840, however, Ibadan defeated Ilorin at Osogbo and thereafter pushed them northwards until Offa, not far from Ilorin itself, was reached.
5. Oyebo's 1877 Diary, Entries for 3, 10 and 14 July.
6. Full details of events leading to this defection in S. Johnson's *Journal Extracts* for half-year ending June 1881 - C.M.S., G5A2/02. Also *Correspondence respecting war between native tribes in the interior*, (C. 4957, Parl. Pap. 1887) 'Statement of the Ife Chiefs made at the Ife Camp. April 27, 1886' - Encl. in Moloney to Granville, June 23, 1886.
7. In theory, the *Alaafin* claimed overlordship over the whole Oyo country including Ibadan, but in fact, he did not control more than a small area around Oyo town plus some towns northwards to the Upper Ogun District.
8. C.M.S., CA2/019. Allen W.S. 'Journal Extracts for the half-year ending June 1879.' Also Parl. Pap. 1887, C. 4957. "Statement of the Apena's Mission to the king of Ijebu" - Encl. in Moloney to Rowe, Jan. 31, 1883. P.R.O., C.0147/38,



- Maser to Moloney, Sept. 29, 1879, Encl. in Usher to Hicks – Beach, 30 Sept., 1879.
9. C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/5, Latoosa's undated letter to Lt. Governor of Lagos, Jan. 1882.
10. Johnsons: *History of the Yorubas from the earliest times to the beginning of the British Protectorate*, Lagos, 1921, pp. 413–417.
11. CO. 147/39, Moloney to Usher, November 19, 1879.
12. Parl. Pap. 1887, C. 4957, account by Chief Ogunsgun in 1886 – Ogunsgun to Moloney, 26 April, 1886. Encl. in Moloney to Granville, 23 June 1886.
13. CO. 147/39, Pedro Martin's Report of his mission to Abeokuta, November 10, 1879, Encl. in Moloney to Usher, November 19, 1879. Also *Lagos Observer*, September 27, 1883.
14. C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/5, P.J. Meffre's Report of his mission to Imesi-Ile in 1882.
15. C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/5, Johnson to Griffith, November 29, 1881.
16. C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/5, Johnson to Griffith, 23 January, 1882.
17. McIntyre: *op. cit.* (Until 1874, Lagos was supervised from Sierra-Leone as one of the four West African British possessions. The 1874 arrangement broke this union and put Lagos and Gold Coast together under a Governor-in-chief at Accra. This was supposed to bring the officials at Lagos under more intimate control).
18. C.O 147/36, Lees to Moloney, Encl. in Lees to Hicks-Beach, 7.10.1878.
19. Figures available in the 'Blue Books' and 'Annual Reports'.
20. CO. 147/45, Moloney, to Rowe, May 12, 1881, Encl. in Rowe to Kimberley, July 2, 1881.
21. CO. 147/39, Usher to Hicks-Beach, October 24, 1879.
22. CO. 147/39, Report of J.A. Payne's mission to the Awujale, November 11, 1879; Report of Pedro Martins' mission to Abeokuta, November 10, 1879 – Encls. in Moloney to Usher, November 19, 1879.
23. CO. 147/42, Ogundipe to Griffith, August 30, 1880; Encl. in Usher to Kimberley, 28 September 1880.
24. CO. 147/45, Griffith to Kimberley December 23, 1880; also story in *Lagos Times* 24 November 1880.

25. See McIntyre: *op. cit.*, pp. 57-79.
26. C.M.S. (Y) 1/75, Johnson to Griffith, 23 January 1882.
27. *Lagos Times*, January 26, February 8, 1881.
28. A correspondent of the Dec. 8, 1880 issue of the *Lagos Times* lamented that "this Colony has suffered, and is still suffering seriously by reason of the said union of Lagos with the Gold Coast.) An unyielding system of red-tapism has often tied the hands of the Executive so that he is powerless to act with effect at the right moment". It went on to demand that "the sooner Lagos is separated from Accra, the better every way for the people of this Colony".
29. Parl. Pap. 1887, C.4957, Hewett to Moloney 14th Jan. 1881, Encl. in Rowe to Kimberley, 2 July, 1881.
30. C0147/44, Moloney to Rowe, 12 May, 1881.
31. C0147/45, Rowe to Kimberley, 2 July, 1881
32. *Lagos Times*. 27 April, 1881.
33. Parl. Pap. 1887, C. 4957, Hewett to Moloney, Jan. 14, 1881, Encl. in Rowe to Kimberley, 2 July, 1881.
34. C.O. 147/43, Moloney to Griffith, 22, Feb. 1881.
35. C.O. 147/44, Moloney to Rowe, 12 May, 1881.
36. First raised in 1873 and discussed in Strahan to Berkeley, Dec. 10, 1873-C.0147/28; again raised, in a slightly different form in Dumare to Lees, 1 July, 1876-CO. 147/34.
37. Parl. Pap. 1887, C.4957, Rowe to Kimberley, 2, July 1881.
38. The Ondo chiefs told J.B. Wood in 1885 that they had frequently "received insolent messages from the Ibadans through swaggering and boasting slaves of *Are*... as to what *Are* was going to do with them — " C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/6, Wood to Lang, Aug. 19, 1885. Of Chief Aderin, Johnson reported, "I was told by him that the Ibadans threaten to punish him and his country whether or not they (Ibadan) are successful (in the war)" - C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/5 Johnson to Governor-in-chief, 1 April, 1882.
39. Johnson: *History of the Yorubas*, pp. 454-456.

40. C0. 147/47 Johnson to Griffith, Nov. 26 and 29, 1881, Encl. in Rowe to Kimberley, 18, Jan. 1882.
41. C0. 147/47, Johnson to Griffith, Nov. 26 and 29, 1881, Encl. in Rowe Kimberley, Jan. 18, 1882.
42. C0. 147/47, *Alaafin* to Griffith, Oct. 15, 1881, Encl. in Rowe to Kimberley, Jan. 1882. The *Alaafin* also appealed to Rev. Wood of the C.M.S. asking him to use his influence in persuading the Governor to intervene – C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/5, the *Alaafin* to Wood, Oct. 15, 1881.
43. The necessity to clear the letter arose from doubts expressed by a section of the emigrants in Lagos as to the authenticity of the letter.
44. Parl. Pap. 1887, C. 4957, Letters by Griffith to the various rulers of the interior - Enclosures in Rowe to Kimberley, March 14, 1882.
45. Details in Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 467–473.
46. C0.147/48, Rowe to Kimberley, 15, April, 1882.
47. Wm. McCoskry told the 1865 Select Committee that the African traders in Lagos enjoyed a lot of advantages in trade in the interior from being natives of the country; that, even during disturbances, they could carry on trade 'while the Europeans carry on none' pp. 1865, V (1).
48. C.M.S. G3A2/02, Wood to the C.M.S. Secretaries, Dec. 14, 1881.
49. C0.147/84, Rowe to Kimberley, 15, April, 1882. For this reason, Moloney decided, when interior delegates were again invited to Lagos in 1886, that they should not be allowed to have contact with the Lagos people. So he lodged them in government quarters.
50. Once the Yoruba "have got into a conflict", said Wood, "... they are most careful not to ask for mediation, for fear it should be thought that they are conscious that they are the weaker side. And unless the mediator appears on the scene in such a way as shows that his interpolation has not been sought, his aid is refused and the war goes on... For a tribe to ask for mediation is to confess that they feel themselves hardly driven, and is a step taken only as a last resort" C.M.S. G3A2/02, Wood to C.M.S. Secretaries, 14, Dec. 1881.
51. See e.g. Meffre P.J's Report of his mission to the Ekitiparapo camp in Feb. 1882, C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/5
52. C0. 147/48, Rowe to Kimberley, 15, April, 1882.

53. C.M.S. (Y) 1/7/6, Johnson to Griffith, 23, January 1882.
54. Parl. Pap. 1887, C. 4957, Moloney to Griffith, 26, Dec. 1882.
55. Parl. Pap. 1887, C. 4957 'Statement of the Apena's mission to the king of Ijebu, Encl. in Moloney to Rowe, 31 January 1883.
56. CSO. 1/12/1, Rowe to Moloney, Feb. 14, 1883. (CSO - Chief Secretary's office papers now lodged in the National Archives Ibadan).
57. CSO. 1/12/1, Moloney to Rowe, Feb. 28, 1883.
58. CO.147/52, Earl of Derby to Rowe, March 28, 1883.
59. CO.147/54, Evans to Griffith, May 19, 1885.
60. A.B. Aderibigbe in his *Expansion of the Lagos Protectorate* (Ph. D. Thesis London 1959) discusses the growth of this rivalry in pp. 123-136.
61. CO. 147/55, Evans to Griffith, Sept. 17 1885; also Johnson: *op. cit.*, pp. 500-502.
62. Akintoye S.A: *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland* Chapter IV.
63. CS. 05/1, Treaty of peace etc., between various Yoruba rulers, 1886.
64. Parl. Pap. 1887, C. 4957, Report of the Special Commissioners 1886, Enclosures in Evans to Stanhope, Feb. 10, 1887 and Higgins to Col. Secretary, June 20, 1887.
65. CSO. 1/1/12, Evans to Holland, April 11, 1887.
66. CSO. 1/1/12, Phillips to Moloney, Sept. 3, 1888, Encl. in Moloney to Knutsford, Oct. 24, 1888; also Phillips 1/1, Phillips' 1887 Diary, Entries for Oct. 18 and 19. (From Private Papers of Bp. C. Phillips, Nat. Archs. Ibadan).
67. Phillips 1/1, Phillips' 1887 Diary, Entries for March 2 and 20 April, 26.
68. Johnson: *op. cit.* pp. 576-583.
69. A second Ijebu army formed in 1882 and sent under the Seriki Ogunsigun to join the Ife and Ekitiparapo in the siege of Modakeke.
70. The main Ijebu army which, since 1878, had encamped at Oru as the base for operations against Ibadan. Its leader, the *Balogun* Onafowokan, was the leader of the revolt against the *Awujale* in late 1882 to 1883.



71. CSO. 1/1/12, Evans to Holland, Feb. 28, 1887.
72. CSO. 1/1/12, Evans to Holland, Feb. 28, 1887; Evans to Hollands, April, 11, 1887; Moloney to Holland, 23 March 1888.
73. CO. 147/83, Manchester Chamber of Commerce to Knutsford, March 31, 1891; Liverpool Chamber of Commerce to Col. Secretary, Jan. 27, 1891, Encl. in Denton to Knutsford, Feb. 7, 1891.
74. Parl. Pap. 1887, C. 5114, *Further Correspondence on War between Native tribes in the Interior of Lagos*, Evans to Col. Secretary, Jan. 28, 1887; Evans to Holland, May 19, 1887; in the first quarter of 1887 alone the deficit was estimated at £3,600 – Evans to Holland, April 15, 1887; also CSO. 3/1/2; Moloney to Knutsford, Desp. Confidential of April 5, 1890.
75. CSO. 5/1, Treaty of friendship etc., between Adeyemi, the *Alaafin* of Oyo, and the Queen of Britain, 1888.
76. CSO. 1/1/12, Moloney to Knutsford, Oct. 10, 1888.
77. CSO. 1/1/12, Moloney to Knutsford, Oct. 15, 1888.
78. CSO. 1/1/12, Moloney to Chiefs of the Ekitiparapo, Sept. 25, 1887, Encl. in Moloney to Holland, Oct. 8, 1887.
79. CSO. 1/3/12, Moloney to Knutsford, Oct. 24, 1888.
80. MOP. 4/4. (Nat. Archs. Ib.) *Report by Major Macdonald of an Expedition to Ilorin, Sept. – Oct. 1889.*
81. Johnson: *op. cit.*, pp. 589–93.
82. CSO. 1/3/2, Moloney to Knutsford, Desp. Confidential, April 19, 1890.
83. Johnson: *Op cit.*, pp. 614–15.
84. Geary: W.N.M. *Nigeria under British Rule*, London, 1965, p. 51.
85. Signed for the Ijebu by certain emigrant men in Lagos (Messrs. T.A. Payne and J. Williams) who were of Ijebu origin, and later repudiated by the Ijebu authorities; this Treaty of 1892 remains a subject of interest and discussion. To what extent, for instance, can the signatories be described as mandated by Ijebu-Ode? Or, were the Ijebu authorities, in asking signatories to act for them, only diplomatically evading entering into a Treaty with the British? See Aderibigbe: *op. cit.*, p. 205.
86. Parl. Pap. 1893, C. 7227, *Despatch from sir Gilbert T. Carter furnishing a general report of the Lagos Interior Expedition.*
87. CSO. 1/1/14, Carter to Ripon, Aug. 30, 1894.
88. CSO. 1/1/16, Carter to Chamberlain, Jan. 11, 1896.

## **Chapter Twenty Five**

# **The Educated Elite in the Search for Peace**

### **S.O. Arifalo**

While the Kiriji War was raging, peace initiatives came from four main quarters: the indigenous powers in the hinterland the modern educated elite in Lagos, the missionaries and the Lagos Colonial government. Although the modern educated elite did not go very far with their peace initiative, some of them remained vocal and featured prominently for good or ill in most of the peace moves during the war. Who then were the modern educated elite?

In the 1850s there was a great influx into Lagos of Western European educated Africans from Brazil, Cuba and Sierra-Leone who had earlier been sold into slavery. Those from Sierra-Leone were known as Akus or Saros, while those from Brazil and Cuba were called Agudas.<sup>1</sup> The Saros were mainly protestant missionaries, teachers, clerks and traders. The Agudas were mainly catholics, skilled artisans and craftsmen. Most of these returnees could still trace their roots to some of the hinterland kingdoms such as Ijebu, Egba, Ijesa, Ekiti, Oyo, Akoko and Nupe. In fact, some of them maintained close connection with their kingdom in the interior of Lagos. The returnees had learned the magic language of the whitemen and had also acquired his culture. They enjoyed a large measure of economic independence. Many of them prospered in commerce and became comparatively wealthy. There was also a group of Yoruba Lagosians who came from families which had been exposed to Western Education and influences for many years. The liberated slaves and this group of Lagosians formed what has been termed "the modern educated elite" as distinct from the traditional elite who were mainly the traditional rulers and chiefs. In short, the modern elite can be defined in Patrick Cole's words as:

... that section of Lagos Society which was distinguished by English education and roles in imported European institutions of administration, education and business, school masters, government servants, clergy, servants of European firms and so on.<sup>2</sup>

With time, the Lagos modern elite were divided along ethnic lines. Four distinct groups could be identified. These were the Egba, the Ijebu, the Ibadan-Oyo and the Ekiti-Ijesa.

From the 1880s onward most of the wealthy returnee merchants in Lagos were Egba. These included men like J.W. Cole, J.J. Thomas, R.B. Blaize, R.A. Coker, Henry Robin, J.A. Savage and C.J. George. Many of them not only had trading houses in Abeokuta but they encouraged their kinsmen to take their produce directly to Lagos for sale and made it impossible for a non-Egba to own a trading store in Abeokuta. Members of this group, because of their wealth, influenced matters both in Lagos and in the interior.

Among the most outstanding figures in the Ibadan/Oyo group were: I.M. Willoughby (merchant), A.C. Willoughby (inspector of police), Hethersett (Government interpreter) and Kester (merchant). In Lagos the government was often fed with Ibadan War propaganda originating from A.C. Willoughby. Hethersett was believed to be collecting his information from R.A. Scott, an Ibadan school teacher who was described as the private secretary to Aare Latoosa. Whenever Ibadan was in the need of arms the message was relayed by Scott to Hethersett. Throughout the duration of the war, Ibadan group were very vocal and active.

The Ijebu group in Lagos was in a microscopic minority represented by three eminent persons: Bishop Johnson, known as Holy Johnson.<sup>3</sup> (He was at one time the superintendent of the Yoruba mission). J.A. O. Payne, the Chief Registrar of the Supreme Court<sup>4</sup> and Jacob Willimas (a merchant). Payne belonged to the Ijebu royal family. These men did maintain some social, economic and political connections with their kinsmen in Ijebu-Ode.

The best organised group was the Ekitiparapo. These were returnees from Sierra Leone, Brazil and Cuba, who were of Ekiti and Ijesa origin and had organised themselves into an association as early as about 1852. In 1876 the name of the association was changed to the Ekitiparapo Society and soon affiliated with the Ekiti-Ijesa Confederacy in the interior. It was believed that the Ekitiparapo society in Lagos goaded the Ekiti Confederacy into rebellion in 1877 by its promise of financial and material support. During the Kiriji War, the Lagos Ekitiparapo Association supplied the Ekiti-Ijesa Confederacy with trained artillery men and arms. Not only was a commercial link opened between Lagos and the interior through the eastern route by the Ekitiparapo association, members of the group moved to Itebu and Ayesan, two strategic points on the route, as farmers and traders with the sole aim of transmitting arms to the Ekiti-Ijesa in their war of independence. The most prominent leaders of the Ekitiparapo association in Lagos were J.P. Hastrup and P.J. Meffre, both of whom were wealthy merchants. Both were actively involved in the war and in the search for peace.

In spite of the division along ethnic lines, one common belief among the Lagos educated elite was that the economic prosperity of Lagos, depended directly on peace in the interior. The policy of the Lagos administration at this time was to try to keep the routes open by diplomatic and moral persuasion on the Abeokuta and Ijebu-Ode authorities. This policy described as one of "non-intervention" by the merchant group of the elite, was regarded as inimical to the economic well being of Lagos, which would be denied of its regular supply of produce. The Lagos press, which was owned and controlled by the elite, reminded the government from time to time, of its obligation contained in the preamble to the 1861 Treaty of cession which enjoined it to prevent wars in the hinterland of Lagos colony. The Lagos educated elite, convinced that the wars could only be terminated by the intervention of Lagos did not take any peace initiative. The initiative came from other sources. In about 1879, the Lagos government decided to take steps to end the wars in Yorubaland. Thinking that the principal parties



were the Ibadan, the Egba and the Ijebu, the Lagos government believed that if these groups were pacified, the wars would automatically end in all the other sectors. It did not realise that the Ekitiparapo were not just mere supporters of the Ijebu and the Egba. Governor Usher sent J.A. Payne and Pedro Martin, two eminent members of the Lagos elite, on a peace mission to Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta. This mission and a similar one sent by Captain Moloney achieved nothing. Although from then till about 1881, a series of attempts were made by various hinterland rulers particularly Derin Ologbenla, the *Ooni*-elect of Ife and Adeyemi the *Alaafin* of Oyo and nominal head of Ibadan, these did not bear any fruitful results largely because of a lack of sincere commitment on the part of these rulers.<sup>6</sup> However, in October 1881, the *Alaafin* in a passionate letter to the Lt.-Governor of Lagos appealed to the British government to bring the war to an end. On receiving the *Alaafin's* letter, Lt.-Governor Griffith asked the Rev. Samuel Johnson, the *Alaafin's* envoy to him, to brief him fully on the situation in the interior. He also consulted a number of educated elite in Lagos.

Unfortunately, the Lagos elite were not enthusiastic on the *Alaafin's* peace moves. The Ijesa group thought that the opportunity had come to rout the Ibadan army and expel them from the Ekitiparapo country. The Ibadan group did not help matters. Isaac Willoughby when consulted made suggestions which appeared geared towards frustrating the *Alaafin's* efforts.<sup>8</sup> Hethersett and A.C. Willoughby were blatantly indignant of the *Alaafin's* insincerity and connivance at the contemplated destruction of Ibadan.<sup>9</sup> James Johnson mirrored the Ijebu opinion of a lack of willingness to cooperate in the peace moves.<sup>10</sup>

Faced with these adverse comments on the *Alaafin's* appeal, Griffith implored Johnson to furnish him with a comprehensive report about the desirability for and the possibility of the intervention of Lagos in bringing the war to an end. Following Johnson's recommendations, Griffith decided to send accredited messengers into the interior to investigate the feelings of the kings and chiefs on how far they wanted peace. The delegates sent on this mission, were all well known members of the Lagos educated elite. The delegates consisted of Simeon D. Kester for Ibadan-Oyo, Phillip Jose Meffire and Joseph Haastrup and Oderinlo Wilson for the Ekitiparapo. The delegation with the *Alaafin's* messenger left Lagos on 5 January 1882, carrying letters from the Lt.-Governor to the *Alaafin*, the Ibadan war chiefs and the Ekitiparapo. On 10 February, the messengers were back in Lagos with envoys of the *Alaafin*, the Ibadan chiefs and most of the other interior kings.

Griffith held several meetings with the envoys before the arrival of the Governor-General, Samuel Rowe from the Gold Coast. When Rowe arrived Lagos in April 1882, he had immediate consultations with members of the elite whose knowledge and judgement he thought he could rely upon. These included Taiwo, Payne, Johnson and Hethersett. Again, various adverse comments and insinuations were made on the peace move, each from his own selfish standpoint.<sup>12</sup> Taiwo, the *Baba Sale* of Lagos, was a big arms dealer supplying arms to both the Egba and Ibadan. Taiwo was of the opinion that the war was caused by the closure of the road to the coast, and argued that only a



forceful opening of the road could bring the war to an end. Payne on the other hand argued that the question of a road to the coast was a mere excuse as an uninterrupted trade was going on between Ibadan and Ikorodu and between Ibadan and Porto Novo. To him the cause of war was the attitude of the Ibadan chiefs and only the prompt removal of their leader, Latoosa, would bring a peaceful settlement. Hethersett promoted Ibadan's cause as forcefully as possible and asked for a six-month delay in the peace talks to enable Ibadan win the war.

Indeed, the only earnest desire for a speedy peaceful settlement in the Lagos elite circle was expressed by Haastrup. He suggested that the parties involved in the war should be asked for their frank proposals for ending the war. He then likened the war to a piece of land owned by five people and that anybody wishing to buy the land should necessarily obtain the signatures of all the five owners to his title deed, otherwise he might end up losing the land. By this he meant that anybody who honestly wanted to end the war should take all the belligerents into confidence or else he would fail disastrously.

Governor-General Rowe, received memoranda from other members of the Lagos elite whose views tally with those already noted above excepting that of Haastrup. They all almost invariably spoke as Ibadan chauvinists. For instance there was no serious indication that any of them actually wanted peace. They were mostly concerned with the opening of the Lagos route to Ibadan. This meant that Ibadan might be able to procure more arms to prosecute the war. Most did not consider the critical issue of the independence of Ekitiparapo. Rowe, who in any case was still pursuing the government's old policy of non-intervention, had an excuse for the time being, to shift the blame for the failure of the peace move on the belligerents themselves.

The next peace move originated from Rev. Hinderer, a retired missionary of the C.M.S., who had worked for many years in Yorubaland and who was deeply disturbed by the wars in the area. On 10 June 1882, he wrote a letter containing very detailed proposals for peace in Yorubaland to prominent educated African elites in Lagos urging them to use their influence to end the interior war.<sup>13</sup> He appeared to have accepted the view of J.B. Wood, the C.M.S., missionary who earlier recognised the possible influence of the Lagos educated elite on the various hostile groups in the interior. Wood had written:

In Lagos there are representative of all the surrounding tribes. These men consider themselves to be both educated and civilised... They, laying claim to the possession of greater knowledge and wider experience than their compatriots in the interior, undertake the office of counsellors of chiefs of their respective tribes.<sup>14</sup>

Hinderer's letter produced the desired result. James Johnson, Henry Robbin and Isaac Willoughby convened a meeting of prominent Lagos elite on 7 December 1882. A resolution was passed about sending Dosunmu to the *Awujale* to end the war and taken to Governor Moloney on the same day. Arrangements were then made to send one of the most powerful and most influential chiefs in Lagos, Ajasa, the *Apena* of Lagos

to Ijebu-Ode with a view to getting the *Awujale's* help towards a general pacification. But before the *Apena* got to Ijebu-Ode the place was in turmoil. It was clear that the Ijebu people did not want to continue with the war against Ibadan while Afidipote, the *Awujale* wanted the war to continue.<sup>14</sup> The *awujale* who had been described as "an excitable and volatile man, more bellicose than his people,"<sup>15</sup> refused the *Apena's* repeated admonitions to bow to the wishes of his people.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the *Apena* was not able to achieve the objective for which he was sent to Ijebu-Ode, but to increase the hitherto flagging popularity of the Lagos government in Ijebu. The *Apena* returned to Lagos on 19 January 1883.

From the *Apena's* episode, the Lagos educated elite demonstrated a total lack of understanding of the interior complex problems. Since the main concern of the merchant group among them was the opening up of the trade routes between Ibadan and the Ijebu and Egba, they thought that if the latter could be persuaded to stop the hostilities all would be well in Yorubaland. They totally ignored the Ekitiparapo factor in the war, without which no lasting peace could be achieved.

However, the *Apena* mission came under fire from certain sections of the Lagos community who thought that the whole exercise was an unnecessary and wasteful interference in the internal affairs of Ijebu. The opinion that it would be dangerous to allow the educated elite to interfere any further in the affairs of the interior kingdoms began to be freely expressed in government circles in Lagos. Shortly after *Apena* Ajasa's return to Lagos from Ijebu, Payne, a prominent Lagos Ijebu man, was disallowed to serve on a mission to see the *Awujale* at Epe because he was a government official and a British subject.<sup>17</sup> Shortly after this incident the Earl of Derby, the Colonial Secretary sternly warned the Lagos government in the following words:

While, however I consider that every possible support should be given to any attempt to promote this object (peace in the interior), I am distinctly of the opinion that no encouragement should be given to any interference on the part of the native residents at Lagos with the affairs of the chiefs in the interior.<sup>18</sup>

The British Government was obviously afraid that the Lagos educated elite might call the attention of kings and chiefs of the interior to the possible danger of the intrusion of the whitemen into their country. However, from this time onwards, the Lagos government neither supported any attempt at intervention by the Lagos educated elite nor encouraged the employment of their services in its intervention in the interior wars. But this position could not be absolute since the Lagos government was still going to employ the services of two members of the elite who belonged to the missionary wing.

In any case, members of the educated elite in Lagos did not share the view of Lagos government on this issue. In other words they were not going to allow themselves to be marginalised. The educated elite regarded Lagos as the main theatre of the war. The *Lagos Observer* on 29 September, 1882 in an editorial said "I have reason to believe that the majority of this community are the instigators of the present war," and the *Lagos Times* of 8 November, 1882 also wrote: "A word from them (educated elite)

would I am sure bush the turmoil."<sup>19</sup> Alfred Moloney was particularly bitter about what he considered to be the role of the educated elite. He said among other things: "... I may give it as my opinion, that half of the troubles of the interior have their origin in Lagos; that such troubles have been promoted locally or by refugees, unfortunately listened to from the garb of christianity and civilisation, that superficially encycled them, from Lagos to interior towns."<sup>20</sup> He castigated the Lagos elite and said that they were merely interested in their pockets "regardless of the country of which they profess to be (a feeling but skin deep) ardent supporters."

Some of the interior chiefs also began to use the Lagos press for the purpose of their war propaganda. Latoosa, the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo* of Ibadan, in a letter to I.H. Willoughby, Sumaru Animashaun and Taiwo, all Ibadan-Oyo, catalogued his grievances against the Egba, the Ekitiparapo and the Ilorin. The letter was both published in the *Eagle* and the *Lagos Critic* owned and edited by E.O. Macaulay, an Oyo man. The letter ended with a call for an urgent action among the Ibadan-Oyo group in Lagos. It said: "Stir up the interest of your country and people. We submit the matter to you our kinsmen that you take it up on our behalf."<sup>21</sup> The *Owa* of Ilesa also sent a letter to his nephew J.P. Haastrup, also stating the reasons for the conflict against Ibadan and terms of peace acceptable to the Ijesa.

It must be pointed out here that the rapport between the elite and the interior kings and chiefs had a special significance. The kings and chiefs relied on their kinsmen in Lagos for information on the thinking of the Lagos government, and plans of their enemies; diplomatic pressures on the unwilling Lagos government and continual representation to the government. For instance in January 1884, a meeting of a cross-section of the educated elite in Lagos was called to discuss sending of a petition to the British Government in the United Kingdom. The petition which was eventually dispatched to London enumerated what the elite considered the ills they were suffering in Lagos. The elite believed that Griffiths efforts in 1882 would have resolved the interior problems once and for all if Governors Usher and Rowe as well as the Colonial Office had not put impediments in his way. As it was necessary to obtain a clearance from Accra before taking any action the petitioners thought that the Lagos administration was under a disability to act decisively – if a similar occasion should arise in future. The petition was signed by twenty clergymen, two muslim priests, 21 muslim traders, 35 artisans and tradesmen, 50 schoolmasters and all the principal Saro and European merchants. This was one occasion when the various groups of the elite tried to fight a common course.

Towards the end of 1884, Lord Derby made a reply to the petition, which he regarded as containing some grievances "wholly without foundation." He said that it was too early to assess the success of the amalgamation of Lagos with Accra. The Lagos elite sent two other petitions on the same issue. In 1885, as a result of French and German expansion in West Africa, Britain decided to make Lagos a separate colony.<sup>22</sup> The Lagos elite were extremely delighted and celebrated the occasion as a major victory.



In the same way, the elite had an overrated opinion of their own ability to bring the interior war to an end whenever they wished. This is not to say that they did not have an impact on the war. Those who sold arms did and two members of the missionary wing of the elite did a lot to bring the war to an end. But the hard core of the modern educated elite who were based in Lagos failed to realise the fact that they had evolved, as an instrument of state policy among the various kingdoms in the interior. Unprecedented massive population movement, the slave trade and its effects, the use of new weapons had revolutionised the mode of warfare and given birth to the phenomenon which altered the power structure in the various Yoruba kingdoms. The revolution had produced a new polity known as Ibadan. The second half of the 19th century witnessed the social, economic and political ascendancy of the war chiefs over the political and religious chiefs in most of the states of the hinterland. "War lords" like Ogundipe of Abeokuta, Ogedengbe and Fabunmi of Ekitiparapo and Latoosa of Ibadan were firmly in charge of affairs in their different states.

To think that the educated elite in Lagos could influence the interior chiefs to end the Kiriji War was to grossly underrate the calibre of the chiefs. The educated elite did not seem to understand that the interior rulers were merely using them as a political lever over the Lagos government. It was most unlikely that war chiefs like Ogedengbe, Ogundipe, Onafowokan and Aare Latoosa would be so docile as to be used as catspaw by the Lagos educated elite. Let us look at the standing of two of them in their communities. Ogedengbe and Latoosa.

As the Commander-in-Chief of the Ekitiparapo army, Ogedengbe was the most powerful individual in the allied army. Not only that, he was the chief executive officer. He also enjoyed great powers over decision-making. In addition to his outstanding personal qualities and his prestige as an indefatigable military leader, he had at his beck and call a large personal army. The Owa and the Ekiti kings had such an implicit confidence in him that they gave him a free hand to negotiate peace on their behalf. When the agents of the Lagos government went to Imesi-Ile to discuss peace,<sup>23</sup> the *Ore* of Otun told them: "Whatever the *Seriki* (Ogedengbe) had said was what the Ekiti kings meant." The *Olojudo* of Ido also told them: "All we have had to say we have told the *Seriki* and he has communicated it to you... You only have to tell the *Seriki* today and we will go home tomorrow." It was unlikely that a highly respected and strong willed man like Ogedengbe would bow to the wishes of the Lagos educated elite easily.

Latoosa, the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo* of Ibadan was a person who was dreaded all over Yorubaland. He was said to have declared war on the Egba against the wishes of the king and his own war chiefs. In short, he crossed the Rubicon alone. He was so ambitious that his enemies accused him of trying to make Ibadan the sole ruler of the whole world. Latoosa's death in 1885 was one of the major factors that made the peace of 1886 possible. It was highly unlikely that a military leader of Latoosa's calibre would be subjected to the whims and caprices of the Lagos educated elite or could be easily manipulated by them.

After the Ajasa's episode, the consensus seemed to have been that the Lagos



educated elite acting independently and with separate interests and loyalties could not bring an end to the hostilities in the interior. The officials of the Lagos government began contemplating on a peaceful government intervention. When Governor Rowe was in Lagos in May 1883 he set out to organise systematically, a well informed mission. Initially he consulted the three members of the educated elite, considered most knowledgeable about the main issues involved in the war — James Johnson, J.H. Willoughby and Robbin, representing the Ijebu, the Ibadan-Oyo and the Egba countries. The three were of the view that matters had become more complicated by the expulsion of the *Awujale* from his capital and that any firm arrangement for lasting peace in the land should begin with an arrangement between Ibadan and the Ekitiparapo and then extend to the other partisans in the conflict. Within this framework and after the Rev. J.B. Wood's abortive attempts to secure peace in 1884 and 1885, the Lagos government for its own ulterior motives, secured the services of two C.M.S. missionaries: S. Johnson and Charles Phillips. Although these gentlemen were working for the C.M.S. in Yorubaland, for all practical purposes, they should be regarded as members of the missionary wing of the educated elite.

Charles Phillips and Samuel Johnson set out on their peace mission in March 1886 to visit the various war fronts and the main towns in the interior of Yorubaland. On their return to Lagos in late May, they were accompanied by the envoys of contending parties, each properly accredited and authorised to accept the terms of the treaty to be negotiated under the auspices of the Lagos administration. Between 31 May and 4 June, 1886, the terms of peace were drawn up into a formal treaty entitled "Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Commerce".

Between June and July 1886 Phillips and Johnson again went on a mission to the interior to obtain the signatures of the respective kings and chiefs to the Treaty of Peace. On this occasion certain problems arose from the objections raised to some of the terms of the Treaty by Modakeke and the Ekitiparapo. But Phillips and Johnson with tact and an unusual patience ironed out all the seemingly intractable problems.

The next task was the execution of the terms of the Treaty. The Acting Governor, F. Evans, appointed a high-powered commission led by the Acting Colonial Secretary, H. Higgins who was assisted by Oliver Smith, Queen's Advocate. Phillips and Johnson also accompanied the Commissioners. After visiting the different camps by the Commissioners, peace was proclaimed between the Ibadan and the Ekitiparapo at the Igbajo-Imesi battle field on 23 September 1886. The Commissioners recorded part of the ceremony thus:

The *Balogun* and the *Seriki* then swore eternal friendship to each other by their respective fetishes. The Governor's proclamation was then read and interpreted, and, a few remarks from us, the ratification of the Treaty was read and interpreted. Each signatory then came to the table as his name was called, and affixed his mark and seal to the document<sup>24</sup>

The 23rd of September 1886 must have been a very hectic day for both Johnson and

Phillips with the interpretation of proclamations and terms of the peace Treaty. The problem which the Lagos educated elite thought would be settled in Lagos was in fact settled in the hinterland.

The contributions of Samuel Johnson and Charles Phillips to the search for and the final attainment of peace in Yorubaland were tremendous and noteworthy. Johnson did not appear to have any inhibitions which could make the Ibadan-Oyo group doubt his sincerity and guidance. Confidence in him had perhaps developed since the days when he took the *Alaafin's* first letter to Lagos in 1881. Johnson was usually regarded as an Oyo man, but he was trained in Abeokuta and grew up in Ibadan before going to Oyo. In any case, he could never have interfered in the internal and external politics of the military state of Ibadan. It would appear that the Ibadan-Oyo group held him in very high esteem. Johnson had a profound understanding of the complexities of Yoruba politics and the unwritten laws of general behaviour towards kings and chiefs in Yorubaland, which he amply demonstrated on his many journeys in Yorubaland. In the same way, Charles Phillips seemed to have an extraordinary influence with the Ondo people, having previously mediated between them and some of their neighbours such as the Ikale and the Ijesa.<sup>25</sup> He emerged as a great confidant of the Ekitiparapo and became the link between them and the Lagos government. Under the able leadership of these missionaries, representatives of warring camps went down to Lagos to sign the peace treaties. Except for the Ife Treaty, all the others were said to have been drafted by Phillips and Johnson.<sup>26</sup>

During the critical peace negotiations, both Johnson and Phillips played multifarious roles as private secretaries, roving diplomats, interpreters, translators, advisers and even instructors. They played these roles creditably. As there were no typewriters in those days in Yorubaland, these gentlemen wrote in beautiful longhand.

Johnson had an occasion to demonstrate his mastery of the Yoruba language and culture. At Oyo, he told Higgins and Smiths, the special commissioners, that in interpreting before the *Alaafin*, he had to be most careful to choose his words as court etiquette was most strict in Yorubaland in reference to the language use, and words which had more than one distinct meaning could not be used.

On one occasion Phillips saved a situation which was going to lead to the breakdown of negotiations. He warned Ogedengbe about the danger of his boastfulness when he told a meeting that "if the whiteman had not interfered we should have driven them (the Ibadan) back into their country." In their several meetings with the kings, chiefs and people in the interior both Phillips and Johnson handled very many sensitive issues with great care and tact.<sup>27</sup>

However, the commissioner made two uncomplimentary remarks about Johnson and Phillips. In the first one, they said that they were "almost entirely dependent on Mr. Johnson for interpreting. Unfortunately Mr. Johnson was of an exceedingly uncommunicative temperament, and had an inexplicable aversion to being asked questions".<sup>28</sup> In their second remark they did not think that both Johnson and Phillips were neutral. Their words:

Both Mr. Phillips and Mr. Johnson were very strong partisans of the

respective people in whom they interested themselves and apt to view matters in a biased light, which made it somewhat difficult for us to ascertain from them what was exactly going on among the chiefs.<sup>29</sup>

It would appear that the Commissioners were meeting Johnson for the first time and had not understood him. The second remark would appear to be unfair if one views it along with the speed and the smoothness with which the peace Treaty was negotiated. As human beings they were entitled to hold personal views. Unfortunately, the Commissioners did not mention any specific occasion when they displayed "their strong partisanship." According to the evidence at our disposal there is nothing to show that they took sides at the final peace negotiations. But Alfred Moloney saw the two men differently. He wrote:

The important, indeed crucial part played faithfully by two Yorubas as my Representatives during all the time initial transactions proceeded, the Rev. Charles Phillips and Rev. Samuel Johnson must have been viewed with pride and admiration by their fellow countrymen, both in Lagos and generally throughout Yoruba, whose good will and gratitude their services on the occasion have earned.<sup>30</sup>

In this paper an attempt has been made to highlight the role of the educated elite in the search for peace during the Kiriji War, 1877–1886. For sometime they regarded Lagos as the main seat of the war. The educated elite in Lagos brought pressure to bear on the Lagos government to interfere in the war by providing men to lobby the government, by making use of the press and by organising meetings. Some of them sent arms and personnel to their kinsmen in the interior. The Lagos government was not ready to interfere in the war because it dreaded the financial implications of its involvement.

We noted that between 1881 and 1882, the elite sent the *Apena* of Lagos to the *Awujale* of Ijebu-ode, hoping that if the *Awujale* agreed to end the war with Ibadan, the war would end automatically in every sector. We saw that the mission was a failure and that after that the hard core of the educated elite in Lagos were neither encouraged nor allowed by the Lagos government to take any further peace initiatives. The influence of the elite, on the war, however, lingered on till the end of the war. It is noteworthy that the Lagos government was apprehensive of what it considered as the baneful influence of the elite. For instance on May 27, 1886; the Administration reminded the Ekitiparapo envoys in Lagos that they were his guests and said that there were many people in Lagos, who for self interest or ill-will would try to poison their ears.<sup>31</sup> He was obviously referring to the members of the Lagos elite. On 21 June, 1886, the Administrator also gave instructions that the Ibadan-Oyo peace envoys who were then in Lagos, should be kept apart from the Lagos people "among whom also were evil-disposed persons, who as they had done in the past would strive to prolong the interior struggle."<sup>32</sup>

Earlier on, when Phillips got to the Ekitiparapo to negotiate peace he still met with



a stiff opposition from certain members of the Lagos elite under the leadership of James Thompson Gureje. They had preceeded Phillips to the camp. Phillips reported that the opposition he received from this group was greater than the one he received from Ogedengbe himself.<sup>35</sup>

In spite of the largely partisan role played by the hard core of the educated elite based in Lagos, Phillips and Johnson successfully negotiated a peace Treaty among the contending parties while the Lagos government provided the most desired "material force" that supervised the final evacuation of the war camps. The myth which was being built, that solutions to the hinterland problems lay in Lagos, a theme which was later to re-occur in Nigerian political history, was for the time being smashed.

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## Chapter Twenty Six

# The Wars and Imperial Conquests of Yorubaland

J.A. Atanda

### Introduction

For most of the 19th century, the Yoruba people were busy fighting themselves in their bid to re-structure the political order and balance of power in their country.<sup>1</sup> The stage for the first scene of the century-long drama was set in Old Oyo, the capital of the Old Oyo Empire. The prologue was sung in 1796 when Afonja, the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo* (Field Marshall), led the Oyo army to mutiny at Iwere Ile and subsequently to lay a siege against the capital of the Old Oyo Empire, making *Alaafin* Aole's head the prize for raising the siege.<sup>2</sup> From then to the end of the 19th century, it was one war scene after the other, with the scenes constituting, as it were, various Acts in a century-long drama of a play which cannot be totally called a tragedy<sup>3</sup> and which, at the same time, cannot be called a comedy.<sup>4</sup> The actual play which, borrowing the words of Ajayi and Smith,<sup>5</sup> can be titled *Yoruba Warfare in the 19th century*, and whose Acts should just be highlighted in this introductory section, began in earnest when, about the turn of the century, "powerful chieftains [in the old Oyo Empire] turned their arms towards subverting town after town in the Kingdom in order to increase their own wealth and power."<sup>6</sup>

The first in the field in this regard was Opele of Gbogun "who took Dofian and Igbo-Owu," only to fall while besieging Igboho.<sup>7</sup> Hardly had Opele died when the *Jama*, i.e. Muslim force raised by Afonja's allies began operations in Igbomina territory.<sup>8</sup> Then followed the ravages of the country by Ojo Agunbambaru in his encounter with Afonja.<sup>9</sup> Although Afonja was eventually victorious over Ojo Agunbambaru, he soon fell out with his Fulani allies who eliminated him in c. 1823 and turned his rebellion into a Jihad. The wars which the Jihadists fought against Yorubaland in the 1820s and 1830s led, among other things, to the fall of the Old Oyo Empire.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, it required the formidable military force of the newly founded state of Ibadan at the battle of Oshogbo, c. 1840 to check the Jihadists from advancing to southern Yorubaland.

Even so, southern Yorubaland was not saved from the menace of wars. There, more fierce battles were to rage, involving Ibadan and other rival states. The wars in southern Yorubaland, pre-dated the foundation of Ibadan. Their genesis was the Owu Wars of c. 1821—c. 1825, in which Owu, Ife and Ijebu were the main combatants, and which resulted among other things in the destruction of Owu and Egba forest kingdoms.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, it was this war which turned Ibadan, a deserted Egba village, to a war camp

which eventually developed into a military state which, as earlier stated, checkmated the advance of the Fulani Jihadists at the battle of Oshogbo c.1840.<sup>12</sup>

From then to the end of the century, Ibadan became the major protagonist in subsequent Yoruba wars. These were the Batedo War of 1844 between Ijaye and Ibadan; the Ibadan campaigns in Eastern Yorubaland in the 1850s and 1860s; the Ijaye War of 1860–65; Ibadan expedition to Ijebu and Egba territories in c. 1870—c.1877 as well as the Jalumi and the Kiriji or the Ekitiparapo Wars of 1878—1886. Although there was an agreement in 1886, negotiated by the christian missionaries and the Lagos Government and backed by the 1886 Treaty to terminate the war, the soldiers disbanded in that year, in conformity with the agreement, the soldiers at the main theatre of war at Igbajo and Imesi Igbodo camps, did not really go home. They left the main camps only to re-group at Ikirun and Imesi-Ile for further wars in 1886—1893 in which the Ilorin forces based near Offa were the aggressors.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the drawing of the curtain on this century-long drama of warfare had to wait till 1893 when Governor G.T. Carter of Lagos used force to send the combatants home from the Offa War theatre. In the circumstances, the Offa War became both the last scene of, as well as the epilogue to, the century-long play of heroic episodes staged by the Yoruba people.

This paper is, however, neither concerned with the heroic episodes and the heroes whether comic or tragic of such episodes. Nor is it concerned with the causes and details of the wars. Those interested in these aspects will benefit from the existing works on the subject.<sup>14</sup> Rather, the purpose of the paper is to examine that aspect of the results of the wars which was both an irony and a tragedy. I refer to how the wars brought about imperial conquests of Yorubaland. It was an irony because the Yoruba lost in the end what they went to the battlefields to seek or defend, namely, the right to determine how they were to be governed. It was a tragedy because the people fought for so long only to exchange their sovereignty for imperial bondage.

In Yorubaland those who carried out these imperial conquests were principally the British and the French, with the former being more dominant. But they were not the only ones in the field. There were subsidiary imperialists, namely, the Fulani and the Dahomeans. In point of fact, those were much earlier in the field. They only became subsidiary imperialists simply because they too, like the Yoruba, became victims of British and French imperialisms and, thereby, lost whatever areas they conquered and annexed in Yorubaland to the later and more powerful imperialists. A survey of imperial conquests of Yorubaland must, therefore, take account of those affected by the Fulani, the Dahomeans, the French and the British.

### **Fulani Imperial Conquests**

Fulani imperial exploits in Yorubaland should be seen as an extension of the Jihad of Uthman dan Fodio which began in earnest in Hausaland in 1804. This is not the place to dabble into the debate regarding the motive of the Jihad whether it was religious, political, etc.<sup>15</sup> What is relevant here is not open to debate, namely, the fact that the Jihad resulted in the establishment of an empire known as the Sokoto Caliphate.<sup>16</sup> It is this imperial character of the Jihad as it affected Yorubaland that is our concern in this

paper.

The Fulani took the advantage of the Yoruba wars to make an in-road into Yorubaland. It is true that Fulani Muslim reformist preachers had been active in northern Yorubaland since the late 18th and early 19th centuries.<sup>17</sup> It is also true that on the advent of the reformists preachers, Fulani cattle rearers had settled in northern Yorubaland.<sup>18</sup> But the Fulani did not have a political foothold in Yorubaland until Afonja, the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo*, sought their aid in support of his rebellion against the authority of the *Alaafin* with a view to carving an empire for himself out of the Old Oyo Empire. The story of the event is well known and need not be reported here.<sup>19</sup> The point is that the Fulani led first by al Salih, popularly known as Alimi, and later by his son Abd Salaam, took the advantage of Afonja's invitation in 1817 not only to eliminate the *Aare* six years later, but also to embark on systematic conquests of parts of Yorubaland. They ravaged northern Yorubaland.<sup>20</sup> They also sent their armies, separately in collusion with the same faith collusionists in Iwo as far south as Oyo refugee bases in Moro, Ipetumodu, Yakoyo, Sopo, Ogi, Apomu and Ikire, all in Ife territory.<sup>21</sup> The settlers had to desert their towns and villages to take refuge in Ile-Ife. But the Fulani did not dare to attack Ife, apparently for fear of defeat. They also made their attack a fleeting one as the inhabitants of the assaulted towns, as indicated, deserted, leaving nobody for the Fulani to dominate. But on the whole, torn, as they were, by internal strife, the Yoruba were unable to ward off the Fulani menace until c.1840. As a result, they lost a considerable part of northern Yorubaland to the Fulani. The areas annexed by the Fulani included Ilorin and the adjoining territories, Igbomina area and northern Ekiti Kingdom.<sup>22</sup>

It is true that some of these areas were recovered by Ibadan after stopping Fulani advance southwards at Oshogbo, c.1840. But later, the Fulani took the advantage of Kiriji or Ekitiparapo War between Ibadan and the Confederate army of the Ijesa and the Ekiti to embark on the re-conquest of these areas. Consequently, the Yoruba territories from Ilorin southwards to Offa and eastwards to Akoko as well as northern Ekiti up to Otun came under Fulani.<sup>23</sup> Fulani domination of these areas were only superseded by British imperialism at the close of the 19th century.

The Fulani also invaded Western Yorubaland, particularly Sabe, Ketu and northern Egbado in early 19th century.<sup>24</sup> But they could not make permanent territorial acquisitions in these areas, their efforts being superseded there by Dahomean imperialism.

### **Dahomean Imperial Conquests**

Up to the end of the 18th century, Dahomey was a vassal state of the Old Oyo Empire, paying heavy tribute imposed on her following her subjugation by Oyo army.<sup>25</sup> But the crisis in the Old Oyo Empire at the turn of the century emboldened Dahomey under King Gezo to make a unilateral declaration of her independence in 1818. What is more, the power struggle and the attendant wars in Yorubaland following the fall of the Old Oyo Empire, further emboldened Dahomey to design imperial ambitions in Yorubaland. The aim of this design was not just to reverse her past domination by the rulers of Old Oyo, but also to acquire the agriculturally rich and commercially strategic western



Yorubaland contiguous to Dahomey.<sup>26</sup>

The execution of the design began in earnest as seen as Dahomey consolidated her independence from Oyo. Thus, by the 1830s, Dahomey began to invade Egbado area,<sup>27</sup> Ijanna, near Ilaro, was attacked in 1831, followed by that of Refurefu in 1836. Sabe kingdom was invaded a number of times between 1830 and 1848, with many of its settlements destroyed. Indeed, it was the Egba that halted Dahomey's imperial conquests of Yorubaland in this direction.

It happened that about the time Dahomey was nursing and prosecuting her imperial designs in Egbado area, the newly established Egba State of Abeokuta had similar programme in Egbado area. In the circumstances, confrontation between them was inevitable, and it soon came.<sup>28</sup> Both first clashed at the Iweri-Anago town of Ado in 1844. In the ensuing encounter, the Egba woefully defeated the Dahomeans. In revenge, Dahomey planned a grandiose attack on Abeokuta. To clear the way for this attack Dahomey attacked and destroyed Oke-Odan in 1848. She then mounted a massive assault on Abeokuta in 1851. But it was a fiasco, with Dahomey losing with very heavy casualties. But she did not give up her attacks on Yorubaland.<sup>29</sup> In the 1860s Dahomey destroyed many towns in the Kingdom of Ketu. Between 1862 and 1863, she conquered Ibara, Ishaga and Ilawe.

The final phase of Dahomean imperial aggression and conquests in Yorubaland came in the 1880s. In 1882, Imeko was razed to the ground. In 1884 the re-built Oke-Odan was destroyed. The kingdom of Sabe was re-invaded in 1884 and 1885 and its capital burnt down in the latter year. The Kingdom of Ketu fell in 1886 and its capital burnt down. Many of the inhabitants of the once swarming city fled to take refuge in Lagos, Iseyin, Abeokuta and Ohori Ije. But the bulk of the surviving population was led into captivity in Dahomey where they remained in bondage until the French liberated them in 1892–4. But the liberation was not freedom as such. As it turned out, the people only exchanged Dahomean imperialism for French imperialism.

### **French Imperial Conquests**

French imperial conquests in Yorubaland was limited, when compared with those of their British counterparts. Indeed, it may even be argued that it would amount to a misnomer to apply the term "conquests" to Yoruba territories that fell under French control. For, the French did not strike direct as such against the Yoruba in these territories. Rather the affected territories became theirs as a prize for defeating the Dahomeans who had earlier conquered and annexed these areas. Indeed, the Yoruba in these areas saw the French, at least initially, as their liberators from their Dahomean oppressors.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, in so far as the French had to wage war, even though directly against the Dahomeans rather than against the Yoruba, to acquire these territories, it is in order to talk of French imperial conquests in Yorubaland.

Besides, it must not be taken that the French had no imperial designs in western Yorubaland. They actually struggled with the British to acquire territories in Yorubaland. Asiwaju has pointed out,<sup>31</sup> the adverse effect of the Dahomean – Egba Wars in western Yorubaland on trade in Lagos and Porto Novo made the British and the French to get

actively involved in the politics of both coastal towns in order to protect their respective economic interests. When the British, who had bombarded Lagos in 1851 and annexed it in 1861, went on to bombard Porto-Novo in the latter year, the French quickly reacted by bringing Porto-Novo under their protection in 1863. "The French action", as Asiwaju has rightly noted, "was dictated by the need to protect their commercial interests in Porto-Novo and Whydah and to check the growing influence of the British along this sector of the West African coast."<sup>32</sup> But the French interest was beyond the Aja Kingdoms of Porto-Novo and Whydah. They had interest in developing Porto-Novo "as a base for trade with the Niger through Yorubaland."<sup>33</sup> For this purpose, they were to utilise the "existing route to Abeokuta via Oke-Odan."<sup>34</sup> Also, to check British influence from growing westwards beyond Badagry, the French declared their protection in 1863 over Apa, a place which their protege, King *Soji* of Porto Novo, claimed belonged to "his Kingdom along with Ido, Ipokia and Badagry."<sup>35</sup>

Although, French imperial ambition, like that of the British, waned in this area from the mid 1860s to the late 1870s, it was resuscitated in the 1880. Thus, in 1882, the French re-established their protection over Porto-Novo, Mesiour Viard's mission to Ilara and Abeokuta in 1888<sup>36</sup> was also part of French imperial designs in western Yorubaland. That the French did not eventually carry out actual imperial conquests in these areas was partly due to the Anglo-French prominence of 10 August 1889.<sup>37</sup> In consequence of that Agreement, the French acquired in western Yorubaland the following areas: Itakete, Ohori Ije, Ipobo and also part of Ifonyin Sabe and Ketu Kingdoms, including their capitals and metropolitan districts.<sup>38</sup> Most of these areas had fallen under Dahomey. With the defeat of Dahomey in 1892-4, the French had no difficulty in making good their claims in these areas, as the people initially regarded the French as their liberator from Dahomean imperialism. Even so, the areas which the French got in Yorubaland did not amount to much, compared with those that fell under British imperialism.

### **British Imperial Conquests**

British imperial conquests of Yorubaland spanned the second half of the 19th century and were both physical and psychological. The physical aspects involved actual battles labelled either bombardments or expeditions. The psychological ones fell into two categories, both emanating from the perception of the value of menace of British military might. Some areas in western Yorubaland, growing under the yoke of local imperialism of the Egba and the Dahomeans, saw British military might as a force that could protect them from their local oppressors. Such people voluntarily opted for British overlordship. Others seeking to avoid the type of trauma which British conquests brought on their kith and kin elsewhere, accepted British suzerainty without resistance. In both categories, the affected Yoruba areas opted for defeat without battle. In other words, they were psychologically conquered. For smoothness and convenience, our discussion of both physical and psychological British conquests of Yorubaland will be treated chronologically, an approach which also has element of territorial sequence from the coastal south to the interior north, beginning with the

bombardment of Lagos in 1851.

### **(a) British Bombardment and annexation of Lagos**

The bombardment of Lagos in 1851 and its annexation in 1861 may appear, on the surface, not connected with the Yoruba wars. The popular reason for the bombardment was that the British, in their bid to stop the slave trade, had to use force to restore Akintoye, the deposed *Oba* of Lagos and an "anti-slave trader," to the throne of Lagos in place of his cousin, Kosoko a "slave trader" who had usurped the throne. However, a critical analysis of the episode, as provided by Professor Ajayi,<sup>39</sup> has shown clearly and convincingly that the motivation in the British intervention in the Lagos dynastic feud "was not just the philanthropic desire to destroy the slave trading activities of the Portuguese and Brazilians there, but also the economic desire to control the trade of Lagos from which they had hitherto been excluded and from where they hope to exploit the resources of the vast country stretching to and beyond the Niger."<sup>40</sup> It would even appear that the economic factor far out-weighted the philanthropic one, as the British were later to woo the same Kosoko because of his control of the palm oil trade of Ijebu area from his new base at Epe.<sup>41</sup>

In any case, the pertinent point here is to show that the Yoruba wars had to do with the situation which the British were reacting to either on philanthropic or on the economic ground. In the first place, the Portuguese and Brazilians were able to do brisk business in the slave trade in and around Lagos largely because the wars in Yorubaland had the effect, among others, of making available on an increasing basis through war captives commodities for the trade. And as long as that trade boomed, the British, who had stopped further participation in the trade could not hope to do viable business in and around Lagos. It was thus in their economic interest to stop the trade in order to undermine the business of their rivals and also boost theirs. In the second place, the Yoruba wars, because of their hindrance to free flow of trade other than in slaves were not conducive to the desire of the British to use Lagos as a base to tap the resources of "the vast country stretching to and beyond the Niger." Yorubaland, the theatre of the wars, being the vast country referred to in this context. These economic considerations were therefore crucial to the British decision to bombard Lagos.

The bombardment was carried out in 1851, and it involved the use of military weapons of precision,<sup>42</sup> in the face of which Kosoko, in spite of the heroic resistance he put up with the assistance of the Portuguese and the Brazilians, had to surrender. Although Akintoye was restored to the throne, the real centre of Lagos had passed to the British in consequence of that bombardment.<sup>43</sup> The annexation of the port kingdom effected in 1861 was, therefore, the logical conclusion of the situation created by the bombardment carried out ten years earlier.<sup>44</sup>

By this bombardment and subsequent annexation, Lagos became the first fruit of British conquests in Yorubaland. It also became the base from which further conquests, both physical and psychological, of the area were carried out. The next of such conquests was psychological and took place in the immediate neighbourhood of Lagos, i.e. south-western Yorubaland.



### **(b) British Imperial Psychological Conquests of South-Western Yorubaland**

Largely in consequence of the Yoruba wars, western Yorubaland became a bone of contention and battleground between the Dahomeans and the Egba. The reason for and the nature of the conflict has been mentioned earlier in this paper and need not be repeated. The pertinent point here is that the constant raids of the area by the Dahomeans and the Egba as well as the accompanying devastations made the inhabitants – the Egbado, the Anago and the Awori – so helpless that they were anxious to seek protection from any power that could save them from the Dahomean-Egba menace. The might demonstrated in the bombardment of Lagos in 1851 and Porto-Novo in 1861 commended the British as a power capable of playing the role desired by the people of south-western Yorubaland.

Thus, as early as 1861, the people of Ipokia, Oke-Odan and Ado applied to the British authorities in Lagos for protection.<sup>45</sup> The British reacted by declaring these areas as protectorates in 1863. Although the protectorates were abandoned before the close of the 1860s, the people did not give up their pressure for protection. Their requests were resuscitated in the 1880s when the British themselves were very keen on having permanent territorial acquisitions.<sup>46</sup> Again, Ipokia and Oke-Odan were the first to re-open negotiation in 1882. Ado and Owo joined in 1884 in consequence of another Dahomean's invasions of Oke-Odan in that year. Similarly, in 1888, the people of Ilaro opted for British protection to shake off Egba imperialism.<sup>47</sup>

All these requests for protection were ratified along with the Anglo-French Agreement of August 1889. In consequence of the boundary fixed by that Agreement, the kingdoms of Ilaro, Ipokia, Ado, Oke-Odan, Ajilete, Igbesa, and Badagry came under the British. So were parts of Sabe, Ifonyin and Ketu Kingdoms. Formal declaration of protectorates over these areas was easily effected in August 1891 during a tour made in that month by the Acting Governor of Lagos.<sup>48</sup> Thus, south-western Yorubaland was conquered without a single blow being struck or any shot fired. The Egba who would have protested against or even contested the British annexation of these areas could not do so. They had quickly reconciled themselves to the situation in consequence of the cowering effect on them by the British lightning expedition to Ijebu in 1892.

### **(c) British Expedition to and Conquest of Ijebu, 1892**

The British expedition to and conquest of Ijebu in 1892 must be seen within the context, if not largely as a by-product, of the situation created in that Yoruba kingdom by the Yoruba wars. Professor Aderibigbe has clearly shown<sup>49</sup> that the alleged insult of the British crown by the Ijebu during the visit of Captain Denton to their state was the pretext rather than the real reason for the expedition and conquest. Rather, the real reason was to open up the closed trade route which passed through Ijebu to the interior of Yorubaland. The opening up of the route was vital to the viability of Lagos as a British colony. The Ijebu on their part had closed the road largely to prevent Ibadan from getting arms from traders in Lagos to prosecute the Kiriji or the Ekitiparapo War



to a successful end. But this decision appeared not to be a unanimous one within the Ijebu Kingdom. The people were divided into camps with some supporting Ibadan while others, apparently in the majority, were implacable opponents of Ibadan.

It must not be taken, however, that the polarisation in Ijebu politics was solely due to the Ibadan factor. There is evidence that factionalism in the state was also due to deep-seated struggle for power within the state.<sup>30</sup> Events had led to the deposition of *Awujale* Ademiyewo, alias, Afidipote "master of political intrigues" about 1883.<sup>31</sup> His successor, Aboki, inherited this political turmoil, and he could not manage the crisis which has mastered his predecessor, the "master of political intrigues" himself. Worse still coming to the throne in the period of heat in the Kiriji or Ekitiparapo War which had polarised the Yoruba states into pro-Ibadan and anti-Ibadan camps, Aboki found that the politics of the choice of the camp with which to ally in the war had made Ijebu politics more turbulent still. To support the pro-Ibadan camp meant, among other things agreeing to open the trade route to Lagos. This, apart from paving the way for unwanted Ibadan hegemony, could also be construed by his people as opening the gate for equally unwanted British take-over of the Ijebu state at a time when the British seemed to be hungry for territories in the interior of Lagos. On the other hand, to support the anti-Ibadan camp meant, among other things, closing the trade route and incurring the anger of not only Ibadan but also that of the Lagos Government which was most desirous to have the trade route opened. This latter course Aboki seemed to opt for, considering same to be the more expedient in view of the political situation in his state.

Unfortunately, that course led to disaster. For, when the Lagos Government failed in its diplomatic game to make Aboki and the Ijebu to open the trade route through their state,<sup>32</sup> it decided to use force to achieve its objective. The result was the expedition sent against the Ijebu in 1892, culminating in the battle of Magbon<sup>33</sup> which the Ijebu woefully but gallantly lost. As a result, the Ijebu lost their sovereignty as the British annexed their kingdom and her vassals.

For the Yoruba people the abject lesson of the Ijebu expedition went beyond the Ijebu region. It created a psychological weapon, cutting down the moral fibre of resistance which the Yoruba would have woven against further in-road into their sovereignty by the British. It in part explains the relative ease with which Governor G.T. Carter of Lagos achieved his mission of extending the influence of the British into the interior of Yorubaland in 1893.<sup>34</sup> It certainly formed one of the determinant factors in the acceptance by the Ibadan of the stationing of a British Resident among them in 1893.<sup>35</sup> It was that Resident, as we shall see presently, that completed British imperial conquests in Yorubaland by subjugating the warriors and other recalcitrant elements, the hitherto unannexed areas, namely, Ibadan, Ijesa, Ekiti and Oyo districts.

#### **(d) The Imposition of British Authority on Ibadan, Oyo and Eastern Yoruba Districts**

The inability, or rather the impossibility, of finding a neutral arbitrator among themselves forced the Yoruba to invite the British to end the last phase of their wars,

i.e. the Kiriji or Ekitiparapo War of 1878–1893.<sup>56</sup> Interested in the establishment of peace in Yorubaland so vital to the viability of its Lagos Government, the British, for economic and imperial reasons, accepted the invitation. In the process of arbitrating among the warring people, the British used the occasion to slot in clauses in the various peace treaties that gave them dubious *de jure* imperial foothold in Yorubaland.<sup>57</sup>

It can be argued that, given the wave of European imperialism in Africa generally in the last quarter of the 19th century, the British (or any other European power) would have annexed Yorubaland even if the people were not fighting themselves and had no need of inviting the British to make peace. But no matter how plausible such an argument may be, it will be based, like all the "IES" in historical argument, on speculation. The fact of the situation, of course, was that the British imperialism came into Yorubaland largely as a consequence of the Yoruba wars. The treaties of 1886 with the Yoruba rulers involved in the wars, that of 1888 with the *Alaafin* of Oyo and those of 1893 with the Ibadan and the *Alaafin* severally - all made in the course of ending the Yoruba wars - served as spring-board for British imperial conquests over Oyo, Ibadan and eastern districts of Yorubaland.

Most important in this regard was the treaty of 1893 with Ibadan. Clause 4 of that Treaty provided for the stationing of a British Resident in Ibadan whose duty was to ensure that the peace made was not disrupted by further wars.<sup>58</sup> Captain R.L. Bower, the first incumbent of that office, in his capacity as the Resident Officer and Travelling Commissioner, really took steps not just to ensure peace, but to impose British authority, through physical and psychological conquests, in these areas of Yorubaland which had not yet been annexed by the British. He started by subduing the great warriors of Ibadan, Ijesa and Ekiti as well as their war boys.<sup>59</sup> Some of these, like the great Ogedengbe of Ilesa, were arrested and confined for a period. Bower's highhandedness with the war lords and their boys had a cowering effect on many areas, particularly in eastern Yoruba district, where people quickly subjected themselves to British authority. That Bower's intentions not just to keep peace but to rob the Yoruba people of their sovereignty was vividly demonstrated when he bombarded Oyo in November 1896.<sup>60</sup> An important direct result of that event was the annexation of Oyo and its vassal states in by the British. Bower was planning to deal with Ilorin when an explosion in his arsenal at Ogbomoso terminated his career, though not his life, in Yorubaland.<sup>61</sup> His unfinished business in this regard was done in 1897 when the Royal Niger Company conquered Ilorin and annexed it.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, by 1900, when the British were declaring their protectorates over Yorubaland and other parts of Nigeria, they were, as far as Yorubaland was concerned, merely formalising the imperial conquests they had made in the period of 1851–1897. There can be no doubt that the Yoruba wars facilitated, if they did not occasion, these conquests.

## Conclusion

The imperial conquests of Yorubaland, whether by local imperialists like the Fulani and the Dahomeans or by foreign ones like the French and the British, had and is still

having far-reaching effects on the political fortune of the Yoruba people. The conquests permanently robbed the Yoruba of the right, and perhaps of the vision, to be the over-all masters in their land and over their affairs. They lost parts of their land to local imperialists like the Fulani and the Dahomeans. Irredentist attempts in the 1950s and 1960s to recover and merge these lands with the bulk of the Yoruba areas achieved no positive results and the chances of further attempts, not to talk of success, now seems very remote. Even the bulk of the land lost to foreign imperialists equally slipped away from Yoruba control. Although the British and the French imperialisms over this bulk area ended within a century, sovereignty was restored not to the Yoruba as a group, but to a collectivity of peoples in what became known as Nigeria and Dahomey (now Republic of Benin) respectively. What is more, the Yoruba appear not able to operate or perceive the need to operate, with solidarity in the politics of the modern states in which they have found themselves. While such a situation may be explained in terms of insignificant size of their group in the Benin Republic, the same argument cannot hold in Nigeria where the Yoruba constitute one of the three largest ethnic groups. It would appear that the factionalism doses injected into their body politic in the 19th century by the Yoruba wars and the imperial conquests have been so strong that the realism of modern politics has not yet provided an anti-dote.

## Notes and References

1. The once popular view in imperialist historiography that the wars were fought to catch slaves is now anachronistic having been corrected by Professor Ajayi. See the writings of J.F. Ade Ajayi relevant to the cause and nature of the wars as cited in appropriate places below.
2. For a narrative of the events, see S. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, C.S.S. Bookshops, Lagos, 1969 reprint (first published in 1921), pp. 188–192.
3. Given the dictionary definition, as per Funk & Wagnalls *Standard College Dictionary*, New York, p. 1419 that a tragedy is "a form of drama in which the protagonist ... comes to disaster through a flaw in his nature, the outcome... producing pity and fear in the spectator and effecting catharsis of these feelings; on a play in which the protagonist... is crashed or immobilised by social and psychological forces in conflict," we cannot say that the whole spectrum of the 19th century Yoruba wars had throughout one such single protagonist. There were many protagonists, some coming to disaster, others not.
4. Again, given the dictionary definition, as per *ibid*, p. 270, that "a comedy is a play, a motion picture, etc dealing with human folly in a light and humorous manner, and having a happy ending," we cannot regard the 19th century Yoruba wars as a comedy. Even if wars can be regarded as evidence of human folly, the wars certainly did not have a happy ending.

5. As per title of the book J.F Ade Ajayi & Robert Smith, *Yoruba Warfare in the 19th century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1964.
6. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
7. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*
8. *Ibid. loc. cit.*
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 194–195
10. The attempt by Abdulahi Smith in his "A Little New Light on the Collapse of the Alaafinate of Yoruba," in G. Olusanya (ed.), *Studies in Yoruba History and Culture*, University Press Limited Ibadan, 1983, pp. 42–71, that the Fulani played little or no role in the fall of the Old Oyo Empire is not acceptable and has been critically appraised by this writer in a rejoinder forthcoming in the *JHSN*
11. For an account of the Owu Wars, see Omer-Cooper J.D. and Akin L. Mabogunje, *Owu in Yoruba History*, Ibadan, University Press, 1971.
12. For the rise of Ibadan see Awe B, *The Rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power in the Nineteenth Century*, D. Phil., Oxford Thesis, 1964.
13. For an account of the last phase of the wars, see Akintoye S.A., *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840–1893*, Longman, London, 1971, chap. 7.
14. Ajayi & Smith, *Yoruba Warfare...* *op. cit.*, Johnson, *op. cit.* ( p. 188 ot seq.); Akintoye, *op. cit.*, Awe *op. cit.*, Omer-Copper & Mabogunje *op. cit.*
15. Those interested in the debate can see such works on the Jihad as Johnston, S.H., *The Fulani Empire of Sokoto*, Oxford University Press, London, 1971, Adeleye R.A. *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1804–1906* Longman, London, 1971.
16. For the size and structure of the Caliphate, see Murray last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, Longman, London, 1967. Also Johnston, *op. cit.* Adeleye, *op. cit.*
17. Gbadamosi T.G. *The Growth of Islam in Yorubaland, 1891–1908*, Longman, London, 1978. Chapter 1.
18. Smith Abdullahi *op. cit.*, pp. 50–51.
19. Johnson, *op. cit.* p. 193
20. *Ibid.*, Part II chaps. IX & XIII for the details
21. *Ibid.*, p. 230.



22. *Ibid.*, Part II, chapters IX, XIII, XXXI (pp. 561–566).
23. See details of the conquests made after 1886 in Akintoye, *op. cit.*, chapter 7.
24. Asiwaju A.I.: *Western Yorubaland under European Rule, 1889–1945*, Longman, 1976, p. 27.
25. Akinjogbin I.A., *Dahomey and Its Neighbours, 1708–1818* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, pp. 123–7.
26. Akinjogbin I.A., "Dahomey and Yoruba in the Nineteenth Century," in J.C. Anene and G.N. Brown (eds.), *Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Ibadan University Press and Nelson, 1966, pp.255–269; J.A. Atanda, "Dahomeans Raids on Oke Ogun Towns, 1881–1890: in Episode in 19th Century Yoruba-Dahomey Relations," *Historia*, Vol. III, 1966.
27. Asiwaju, *op. cit.*, pp. 26–27.
28. For succinct account of the eventual clash, see Asiwaju *op. cit.* p. 28. For more details see S.O. Biobaku, *The Egba and their Neighbours 1842–1872*, Oxford, 1957.
29. Asiwaju, *op. cit.* p. 29.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
34. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*
35. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*
36. *Ibid.*, p. 44
37. For the text of the Agreement, see *Ibid.*, p. 45.
38. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.* It is to be noted that, except & in the case of Sabe, the bulk of the subordinate towns and villages of these kingdoms fell to the British.
39. Ajayi J.F. Ade, "British Occupation of Lagos, 1851–1861: A Critical Review." *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 6a, 1961, pp. 95–105.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
42. For an insight into the nature of the weapons used, see Ajayi J.F. Ade *Christian Missions and the Making of Nigeria*, Longman, London, 1965, pp. 70–74.
43. Ajayi, "British Occupation..." *op. cit.* pp. 102–103.
44. For a critique of the British rationale for the annexation, see *Ibid.*, pp. 103–105.
45. Asiwaju, *op. cit.* p. 41.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
47. *Ibid.*, loc. cit.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
49. In Aderibigbe A.B., "The Ijebu Expedition, 1892: An Episode in the British Penetration of Nigeria Reconsidered," *Historians in Tropical Africa*, Leverhulme Inter-Collegiate History Conference, University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Sept. 1960, Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, 1962, pp. 267–282.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 268. Aslo Ayandele E.A. "The Changing Position of the Awujales of Ijebuland under Colonial Rule" in Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime (eds.), *West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status under Colonial Rule and Independence*, Africana Publishing Corporation, New York and University of Ife Press, Ile-Ife, 1970, pp. 236–237.
51. Aderibigbe, *op. cit.*, p. 268.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 268–278 for an account of the diplomatic game.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 274–277 for an account of the actual expedition.
54. See accounts of the mission in Johnson S., *op. cit.* pp. 626–629, British Parliamentary Paper C.7227, General Report of the Lagos Interior Expedition, 1893—(Copy at the University of Ibadan Library).
55. Atanda J.A., *The New Oyo Empire* Longman, London, 1973, p. 52.
56. An analysis of the events leading to the invitation, is given in Atanda J.A., "The Search for Peace in Yorubaland, 1881–1893," Irving and Bonnar Graduate Prize

Essay in History for 1966.

57. Texts of the Anglo-Yorubas Treaties 1886–1893 are reproduced as Appendix in Atanda, *New Oyo Empire*, *op. cit.*, pp. 296–308.
58. Second part of Clause 4 of the Treaty in *Ibid.*, pp. 306–307.
59. See Atanda, *The New Oyo Empire*, *op. cit.*, 54–56.
60. *Ibid.*, pp. 56–77 for an account of the bombardment.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 81–82.
62. For an account of the conquest, see Flint J.O. *Sir George Goldie, and the Making of Nigeria*, London 1960, p. 255.

## **Chapter Twenty Seven**

# **Islam and Intra-Societal Relations in the Post-Kiriji War Years 1879–1960**

**E.O. Oyelade**

### **Introduction: A Socio-Religious Preview**

The intension of this paper is to show that despite the seriousness of the Kiriji War (1877–1886) and the fact that all Yorubaland was involved in it, there was no religious antagonism or the emergence of a Muslim community "pitted against all others" in the post-Kiriji War years. The Muslim community continued to be tolerant and they involved themselves in the positive activities which followed the war.

The significance of the Kiriji War lies not in the war strategies, rather in the fact that all sectors of Yorubaland, whether directly or indirectly, were involved in it; and every sector was determined to "fight to finish." It is further significant to note that religion did not constitute a barrier in the war years. Every religious group –Traditionists, Muslims and Christians saw the war as purely socio-political. Akintoye confirms the above view:

The struggle for dominance in the Oyo-Yoruba country, the Ibadan-Ilorin rivalry, the struggle by the Egba and Ijebu for survival against Ibadan, the reaction of the states of eastern Yoruba countries (as well as the Ife) against Ibadan domination - all and more were encompassed in the war. As such practically all sections of the Yoruba were directly or indirectly involved in it. Everybody seemed to have been determined that this war would have to be decisive, and no party was ready to give any chance to any settlement that did not satisfy its own particular end.<sup>1</sup>

In such a situation of serious stress and power struggle one would have expected the rise of many religious fanatics who will employ religion as a strategy of war. But this did not occur. What really happened was the co-operation of all religious groups as the war affected them. For example during the early months of 1879 the Ekitiparapo leaders convened several meetings at *Otun* in order to solidify the Confederation. Among those who attended were Ifa priests, medicine men and Muslim diviners and charm makers. The oracles were consulted and the gods were propitiated.

It is further revealing to note the cooperating responses to the peace movement in order to bring the Kiriji War to an end. The news of this internal effort in which all religious groups were part of the peace movement certainly impressed the Northern Nigerian kings. In 1883, the *Sultan* of Sokoto, the *Emir* of Gwandu and the *Emir* of Bida, through their representative delegations "succeeded in getting the Ilorin and the Ibadan to return important prisoners of war and to agree to a truce at Offa which endured



for some five months."<sup>2</sup> This gesture was very significant. It encouraged the Muslim elements in Yorubaland to support the peace movement. While the Sokoto *Sultan* was interested in the affairs of Ilorin and Offa, the *Emirs* of Bida and Gwandu were interested in Akoko country because of their own political affiliations during the latter part of the 19th century.<sup>3</sup>

It is further interesting to note that religious sentiments expressed by festivals were not predominant during the Kiriji War years. The Muslim festivals include the festival of thanks-giving after fasting (*'Id-al-fitr*) and the festival of sacrifice in memory of Abraham and Ishmael, (*'Id-al-kabir*). For example between the years 1882–1884 the Ibadan warriors suffered unexpected reverses. The news of bloody battles and heavy losses at Modakeke was added to the defeat experienced by the Ibadan war men at Igbajo. During these encounters Kupolu the commander of Are's infantry, Chief Akintaro, the *Osi*; Chief Ajeigbe, the *Ekerin*; all fell in succession on 24 February 1882. Consequent upon this, sorrow spread widely in the hearts of Ibadan patriots. Chief Alli died both from illness and a broken heart. On the 16 August 1882, the Revd. Allen reported the atmosphere which surrounded the Muslim community of Ibadan. He declared:

The *Ramadhan* fast ends today; people hardly know that the Mohammadans, had gone to pray at the Iwo road as usual.<sup>4</sup>

If the Kiriji War was not motivated by religious enthusiasm or fanaticism what was the motive? As indicated earlier, the main factor was economic. In this case, the Ibadan through its leadership had sought for economic supremacy over the rest of Yorubaland. The major source of revenue was trade—both in commodity and slaves. However slave trade was more popular not only for cash but also for labour. Ayandele referred to slave trade as "living tools."<sup>5</sup> It is no wonder that all other Yoruba communities were against Ibadan blockade of all the roads used by Ibadan traders.<sup>6</sup>

In these trade, especially the slave trade, the Muslims were involved as middlemen and were also affected as slaves. The *Sultan* of Sokoto, Mohammed Bello in his history book, *Infaku'l Maisuri* recorded that the "people of the Yoruba catch slaves from our land and sell them to the christians, so we are told. I mentioned this to stop people from selling Muslim slaves to them because of those who buy them. Harm will result from this."<sup>7</sup> This kind of religious sentiment was not expressed in Yorubaland. Muslims, Christians and Traditionists, all acted in the war period and the negotiation that followed was not as representatives of a particular religion, but as representatives of their particular Yoruba society during the war and as belonging to the entire Yorubaland during the settlement. This does not imply that for the Yoruba man, religion was not important. He however saw religion not as a dividing factor but as a uniting one in order to ensure the safety of the society.

Now what happened to the peace movements? They were considerably effective. The British government became actively involved in the effort to find lasting peace and end of the bloody war. During early 1886 delegates, representing the warring communities were invited to meet the Lagos officials through the services of the C.M.S. agents. Both Samuel Johnson and Charles Phillips were remarkably successful in this effort. The sober response shown by the representatives during the negotiation is indicative of what Professor Akinjogbin described as *Ebi* System by which the Yoruba see themselves as belonging to a common origin and having common aspirations.<sup>8</sup>

In later years of the war, (1886-1893), the colonial office in Lagos recognised the sentiment behind the Yoruba idea of relationship, the social commonwealth. For example, Moloney instead of assuming full responsibility of ending the war through colonial military involvement, sought "to persuade the Yoruba powers to come to terms by appealing to their sentiment. In this respect he pointed to Ekitiparapo that the Ibadan were their kinsmen and that their interests were therefore closer to the interests of Ibadan than they were to those of the Fulani at Ilorin. He suggested that states should set up diplomatic missions with one another and establish institutions for ensuring peace between them.

Although these suggestions were ignored by both the Ibadan and the Ekitiparapo because of the devastating nature of the war over the past years, and probably, because Moloney did not support the so called Yoruba "sentiment" with historical facts of the pre-war understanding of socio-religious relationship – a historical sentiment like the recent "*Egbe-Omo-Oduduwa*"<sup>9</sup> which from the 1950s became the binding cord of Yoruba socio-political unity. But this historical fact ante-dated the Kiriji War and is a sentiment which could have been employed by both indigenous peace movers and the colonial office in Lagos.

Finally, it became evident that British government, in order to ensure lasting peace had to use the force of arms. The Ijebu expedition commanded by Governor Carter himself took place between 1891 and 1892. The result was final opening of Egba-Ijebu roads for free trading. In 1893, the interior issue was taken up with the *Alaafin*. The *Alaafin* agreed to refer all matters of disputes to the Colonial Office. At Ikirun, the Ibadan warriors agreed to return home. Captain Bower prepared the mind of the Ekitiparapo leaders for the final peace talks which was held on the 8th of March, 1893 on the banks of the River Otun. From the 14th of March, the military camps were broken and the home journey began.

## **Islam in Post-Kiriji Years: Reconstruction Participation and Development**

The foregoing socio-religious and political review of the Kiriji War years is meant to show that the Yoruba, culturally were peace-loving. They continued to respond to peace movements, although, there were lapses to gain more war booties. Besides, it is meant to show that religious fanaticism was not employed during the war. Although the dominant powers of Ibadan were Muslims - Muhammad Latoosa, the *Aare* of Ibadan; *Alaafin* Adeyemi I, of Oyo and the *Emir* of Ilorin were all Muslims. Yet despite the tragic nature of the war they were not religiously negative to the rest of the non-Muslim communities, both Christians and Traditionists who approached them to reconsider their stances regarding the war. In fact, both the *Aare* and the *Alaafin* had sought the services of Christian leaders for the promotion of peace through internal and colonial negotiations. On the other hand, their adversaries, the Ekitiparapo powers, comprised Christians and Traditionists. Yet their negotiation leaders mixed freely with their Muslim counterparts to talk about peace. In other words, during the Kiriji War years, unlike the West African experience of the 19th century, there were no calls for the *Jihad* against the "infidels," neither were there any ecclesiastical decrees to promote crusade against the "saracenes" in the near East.<sup>10</sup>

## Impact of Islam in Post-Kiriji Years

During the Post-Kiriji years, Muslims became interested in the affairs of their societies. The challenges before them were those of Reconstruction, Participation and Development. Within the limits of this paper however, only a few evidences could be cited.

## Reconstruction

It is generally known that "magical ammunition," is one of the major factors associated with religion. This means that during the Kiriji War years there were many *Babalawo* (traditional priests), Muslim Clerics and Clergymen who were involved through the unfolding and the use of religious or spiritual powers, in the first instance to win the war, and in the second instance, to bring the war to a close. The deadlock and common experience of frustration and futility of the long standing war undoubtedly gave rise to mutual recognition and mutual respect of all religious adherents and their practices. This experience simply enhanced the already existing cultural heritage which was at stake as a result of the war.

Following the war, there was a need to bring the society to its original harmony. The commitment to the Yoruba cultural heritage of extended relationship coupled with the new experience of religious pluralism became a major aspect of societal phase of reconstructions after the war. The following lyric illustrates this point:

*Awa o s'oro ile wa o (2 times)*

*Imale o pe e o!*

*Imale o pe K'awa ma s'oro*

*Awa o s'oro ile wa o*

*Igbagbo o pe e o!*

*Igbagbo o pe K'awa ma s'oro*

*Awa o s'oro ile wa o.*

We shall observe our family rites (2 times)

Imale (Islam) does not, No!

Imale does not stop us from performing our rites

We shall observe our family rites.

Igbagbo (Christianity) does not, No!

Igbagbo does not stop us from performing our rites

We shall observe our family rites.

The above lyric formed one of the efforts of many religious nationalists who sought, not only peaceful co-existence, but also co-development of the Yoruba society. This early nationalist ambition became very prominent from the 1900s as it became the bed-rock of the *Ogboni* intra-religious myth.<sup>11</sup> The Reformed *Ogboni* Fraternity whose founding was credited to Jacobson-T.J. Ogunbiyi, the son of the Chief Jacob Ogunbiyi, the first Lagos indigenous chief to be converted to Christianity in Obun-Eko in Lagos. It was not a coincidence that Ogunbiyi took the final step to establish the Reformed *Ogboni* Fraternity in 1914 together with other Christian friends, Euba of the Wesley Mission, Dr. Obasa and others. He was familiar with the functions of the *Ogboni* cult during the Kiriji War years. He knew how powerful they were during the years of negotiation to bring the Kiriji War to a halt. In fact, he was already a member of the traditional *Ogboni* cult which was popular in Lagos, the *Adamuorisha* cult. In Lagos while he was a student of the C.M.S. Training Institution from 1866–1889, he heard



consistently the reports of the powers connected with the war. Between 1889 and 1893 he was a teacher in Ondo. There again he was familiar with the roles of power structure involved with the Ekitiparapo movement.<sup>12</sup>

The central theme of the new (R.O.F.) Society could be expressed as "sane morality according to the Laws of Moses." This meant that the cult member must play vital role of correcting the moral laxities - pride and search for political domination; commercial robbery; slavery and slave trade; failure to appreciate the sanctity of life; and thirst for booty. These were the characteristic morality of the war times which the Society must reform. The connection of Cain and Abel story to the origin of the word *Ogboni* was an expression of the R.O.F's commitment to the concept of "sacred life" - man was after all created 'in the image of God.'

But the Society which was originally limited to Christians became opened to all. Muslims joined the membership as well as Traditionalists. Among the attractions for the Muslims were the reference made to Moses whose rules are the centre of Islamic morality and also the reference to Cain and Abel.<sup>13</sup> Of the two brothers, Cain represented abject morality while Abel represented ideal morality. Abel's death was a pointer to the tragedy of war. Since Islam does not make any distinction between state and religion, there was a socio-political attraction for the Muslims in the reformed society. One of the functions of the *Ogboni*, as found by Afolabi Ojo, is the constitution of members "into an intelligence corps, which organised and directed the performance of the legislative, executive and judicial activities of the state." Life-long "ministers of state" were selected from their midst.<sup>14</sup>

Another act of reconstruction to which Muslims made remarkable contribution was in regard to the etiological problems of society. As a standing reality, Yorubaland is a home of fear. It is believed that every person lives in the midst of enemies, seen and unseen. These enemies include evil men like medicine men (*Oloogun*); witches and wizards; traitors and dangerous libels. Then the society is flooded by spirits, good and bad. It follows that no matter what cautions one takes, one must live his life in the midst of enemies. Unfortunately, the Kiriji War years added "insult to injury." The war increased, as it is normal, the ravages of hunger resulting from the destruction of farms; the ravages of disease resulting from malnutrition; war casualties and the ravages of poverty resulting from inter-state road blocks and fear of market raids.

These social problems gave the Muslim Clerics their recognition during the post-war years. From the 1900s owing to the establishment of *Pax Yoruba cum Pax Britanica*, there was free movement which brought into Yorubaland many Muslim clerics from Northern Nigeria and from Ilorin. These Clerics were popular for their magic and amulets. They were also masters of their divination techniques in order to discover the causes of misfortune and prevent them and in order to ensure the continuity of good fortune.<sup>15</sup>

But most of the Clerics in Yorubaland were either members of the *Qadiriyya* rite or *Tijaniyya* rite. These orders formed the spiritual centre of the Yoruba Muslims. The challenge which the society faced was that of survival. So spiritual method was found indestructible by the forces of evil among whom they lived daily. It therefore became popular to accommodate these spiritual orders. The result was the rapid spread - especially the *Tijaniyya* order which became very popular because of its appeal to common people who could not compete with the intellectual demands of the *Qadiriyya*



order.<sup>16</sup> It is however, difficult to pin-down the date when the Yoruba received the first *Tijaniyya* cleric or *Muqaddam*. After the second half of the 19th century, it is known that there were heavy migrations resulting from the Civil wars. The *Tijaniyya* order had been well entrenched in Northern Nigeria after the period of al-Hajj Umar (1853) who became the greatest exponent of the order in most parts of West Africa.<sup>17</sup>

We may proceed to identify some centres in Yorubaland. The gateways to Yorubaland were obviously through the south via Lagos and through the north via Ilorin. The southern introduction came through the influence of the *Aku* (Yoruba) Muslims from Sierra Leone who had come in contact with Alhaji Umar Tal's movement. The Northern introduction came as a result of the migration of Hausa Muslims both from Sokoto and Kano. The *Tijaniyya* was very popular in Kano while the *Qadiriyya* held sway in sokoto.<sup>18</sup> Although there were visitors with a *Tijaniyya* commitment before and during the Kiriji War years, it was after the war that the Sufi (mystical order) became popular. Earliest centres were found in Lagos especially among the Qur'an group.<sup>19</sup> Other centres like Ibadan had the influence of men like Ali Iwo, who, although a warrior of great ambition, was also a Cleric of honour. Oyo had Alhaji Sanni Anwal, Alhaji Adisa and Alhaji Ashimiyu Akewugbare. Iseyin had an Hausa founder, Mallams and later the order was promoted by Alhaji Jeje, the *Khalifah*. For Iwo we may mention again the influence of Ali-Iwo who also became prominent as a Cleric of power during the war years. In Ede the order was introduced by Mallam Zulu Quarnaem who was popularly known as "Alfa Agba" (the elder cleric). He died an old man in 1935. In the later 1950s and early 1960s, Ede received several *Tijaniyya* visitors among whom was Alhaji Shaykh Ibrahim Nyais Kaolack from Senegal. Ile-Ife had received *Tijaniyya* visitors immediately after the war - especially since the 1940s from Iwo and Ibadan. These stayed according to the needs of society in crises. However, by the 1960s the order had been firmly established in six mosques through the influence of Alhajis Bello and Adeosun.<sup>20</sup>

Apart from their prayers and meditations, divinations and prescriptions, the order became an indispensable factor for the promotion of intra-societal relations. For example, colleges known as *Zawiya* were established in various centres. The *Zawiya* was a multi-purpose centre. It served as a religious education centre through its Qur'an schools. Both the Laity (children and adult) and the candidates for mystical training had their Islamic education free of charge. It was also a welfare centre for the wayfarers, feed centre for the hungry, missionary training centre and centre for the training of military men.<sup>21</sup>

It is interesting to note that the 19th century Islamic Brotherhood promoted by such *Muqaddam* like Uthman dan Dofio and Alhaji Umar resulted in the *Jihad*; such was not the case with the "Brotherhoods" in Yorubaland.

Another important aspect of the intra-societal impact of Islam in Yorubaland was the acceptance of the traditional concept of *Oba* or *Baale*. This was a major part of reconstruction in the post-war years. In Yoruba culture the *Obaship* was an hereditary title. He obtained approval of the king-makers. His appointment as an *Oba* was not based on religious affiliation. He was the king of all the various religious and non-religious

groups of his town or city. Besides, the king was the viceroy of the gods and must ensure the safety, stability and progressive economic life for his people. Again, very often he was the commander of the army. He must not of his own invite war, although such was not the case of the *Aare* of Ibadan during the Kiriji War years.

Although Islam abhors any traditional religion, Yoruba Muslims participated fully as rulers or chiefs in the traditional rituals of the society. Since the Kiriji years the *Alaafin* of Oyo were Muslims, and yet they had performed the traditional religious rites of their society.<sup>22</sup> A typical example of pluralism of the king was found in *Baale* Layode of Ogbomoso circle (1910). His praise poem (*Oriki*) goes as follows:

*O ko 'le Esu tan*  
*O ko 'le Olorun pelu*  
*O ko Mosalasi o yanju ketekete*  
*Adegoke Atanda, O ko 'le faari s'oja Jagun*  
*B'eniyan ko yin o, 'Allah yio gbe o.*<sup>23</sup>

Having built the *Esu* shrine (Devil)  
He built God's house also,  
Having built a well-designed mosque  
Adegoke Atanda also built a recreation centre at Jagun's market  
If no man supports you,  
Allah will surely support you.

Investigations in Ogbomoso have shown that it was difficult for all the religious people not to identify the *Baale* with their religion. The shrine, the mosque and the recreation centre, (town hall?) were in response to religious pluralism of Yoruba rulers. It is known that Layode was a Muslim, after his enthronement, he appointed Lawani, a Muslim as his *Jagun* (war chief) and he also appointed Aribisala, a Christian as his secretary. This pluralistic response was meant to ensure peaceful co-existence and co-development in society.

## Participation

The post-Kiriji war years saw a wider reaction of Muslims to both the colonial and Christian missionary presence in Yorubaland. It must be stated here that any assessment of muslim attitude of tolerance and compromise as demonstrating the weakness of Islam is a misunderstanding of the total Yoruba concept of life. For the Yoruba, as we have seen, breaking completely from one's socio-religious heritages was not to be done with levity. Such a break was tantamount to direct antagonism to one's family and society, action capable of inviting great calamities. Muslim divines claim that the introduction of Magic and Amulets; the adoption of the Islamic systems of divination, marriage and funeral services were efforts to contextualise Islam within the Yoruba society.<sup>24</sup>

Muslim responses to both Christian and colonial presence were rather significant. Yoruba Muslims freely attended church services when invited or when it involved any of their relations – during funeral, marriage, birthday parties and Christian festivals. During the early parts of colonial rule, British government had become interested in the affairs of the Muslim community of Lagos and Epe. Since for the Muslims, the British

ruler was also Christian, their responses to both were similar. The Governor of Lagos on 10 April 1889, shortly after the Kiriji crisis was over, had to settle disputes on marriage and dowry among Epe Muslim community.<sup>25</sup> Besides, Edward Blyden, the exponent of negro nationalism, spoke on several occasions in support of Islam. Similarly, although, Revd. Samuel Johnson was more missionary-oriented, he was also interested in Islam and gave credit to the characteristic efforts of Islam in promoting Islamic education and tolerance to Christianity.<sup>26</sup> Another aspect of participation was in Muslim response to Christian education. Despite the criticism that Christian missions employed their schools as proselytising agents, nevertheless, Muslims allowed their children to attend. To authenticate what had been happening in these schools, Dr. George W. Sadler reported in 1945 as follows; having preached in one of the secondary schools in Lagos:

To abbreviate a story that might be long in telling, it may be stated that at the end of the brief series of services, fifty-two of them either Moslems or from Mohamadan homes declared their purpose to become followers of Christ. No one is able properly to appraise an experience of this sort.<sup>27</sup>

Another aspect of Muslim participation in society was the increasing number of Arabic or Qur'an schools. These schools admitted not only Muslim children but also children of traditional religious heritages. In this way it appears that the Muslim community was regaining what they lost to Christianity through the mission schools. But the British government during the early years of post-Kiriji War had sought to introduce Western education into Arabic and Islamic education curriculum. Sir G.T. Carter pleaded with Muslims in Lagos to allow one of their schools for this experiment.

For this reason and others, Edward Blyden was appointed shortly after the war, (1896) as "Agent of Native Affairs." On June 15, 1896, one school with the three Rs was opened in Lagos; another was opened in Epe in November 1898 and yet another Government Muslim School was opened in Badagry in 1899. Other requests from Ibadan and Ijebu-Ode were not granted partly because of administrative difficulties and financial constraints. But these were the nuclei of the Muslim secular schools which flourished in Yorubaland since the 1920s.<sup>28</sup>

## Development

While different religious interactions were going on in Yorubaland, because of tolerance, Islam was expanding rapidly. Several factors contributed to this expansion during the post-Kiriji War years. The support of the rulers for Islam, briefly mentioned, cannot be underestimated. For example after the war, Prince Lamuye became the *Oluwo* of Iwo. He was Islamised in Ilorin. He was invited, paradoxically, on condition that he would abandon Islam. However, as soon as the king-makers that appointed him died, he changed his mind and returned to Islam. Besides, he persuaded his chiefs to accept Islam as symbol of loyalty and cooperation in the 1920s.<sup>29</sup> In consequence of this conversion responses spread from one area to another. Although, Islam had its majority in Iwo, it allowed the establishment of mission Churches and schools. Aipate



Baptist Church was founded in 1919 while the Baptist College was founded in 1939. Another dramatic influence was that of *Baale Oyewumi* of Ogbomoso. In July 1933 at a meeting with his chiefs who had just returned from an Ibadan consultation with the Resident, the *Alaafin* and the *Olubadan*, the *Baale Oyewusi* suddenly stood up and declared: "I want my chiefs to be wearing turban in my court." Although there was initial antagonism, the chiefs later submitted to the wish of the *Baale* and their relations were influenced to convert and accept Islam.<sup>30</sup>

Another important factor which brought the reality of Muslim presence to the people was the increasing number of the Mosques. From the Mosques, the call to prayer by *Muezzin* (Ibadan *Ladhan*) was so impressive in the ears of the surrounding listeners. It was sounded in Arabic. What will it be? In those early years of Islamic resurgence and entrenchment (1840-1900) even non-Muslims were reported to have held their peace in submission to the Muslim call to prayer. At the end of the call, Muslims pronounced the creed loudly: "There is no deity except Allah". But prayer was just one of the functions of the Mosque; it was also used as a school for Islamic education. These schools, as we have noted, admitted whosoever wishes to be admitted irrespective of religious affiliation. It was also employed for various meetings - as a court of the Imam, centre for mystical activities, and centre for social ceremonies.

It is interesting to note that during and after the Kiriji War there was proliferation of Mosques - indicative of Islamic expansion and Muslim influence in the society at large. For instance, as early as 1886, in the heat of negotiations, the Saro mosque at Olowogbowo Lagos was opened with impressive jubilation that Muslim representative attended the first Juma't (Friday) service. Yet in Lagos the Sitta Bay Mosque on Martin Street was opened in 1892 at the tail end of the wars. This was followed, at Ijebu-Ode by the Central Mosque opened in 1896. It is not certain when exactly the Ibadan Central Mosque was opened; it must be between 1895-1900. In Oyo during the reign of *Alaafin* Atiba (1837-1858) several Mosques emerged. Among these were the Central Mosque at Oke-Afin, the Parakoyi Mosque, at Parakoyi quarters and the Ratibi Mosque at Agunpopo. These Mosques apart from their mystical-social influences were manifestations of Islamic expansion. The Iseyin Mosques are worth mentioning. In 1878 when Rev. Samuel Johnson visited the town there were 12 Mosques; but by 1960 there were 16 Mosques. Ogbomosho is known for its growing number of Mosques since the early part of the 19th century because it is the gateway linking the north and the south from Ilorin. Many of these Mosques were built during the reign of Oyewumi between 1890-1933.<sup>31</sup> It should be mentioned in passing that since the beginning of the 20th century, Muslims had travelled to various parts of Ekitiland to establish Islam. Records, which need further investigation, reveal the impact of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society on the Ekiti society through their promotion of both Islamic and Western education.

The post-Kiriji era gave more time to Muslim liberals to re-examine and strongly argue in favour of Western education. The biggest factor that strengthened Western education movements was the establishment of Muslim societies. For example as early as 1895, shortly after the close of the war, there was founded in Lagos, Egbe Killa (Killa



Society). It argued that Western education was in no way a hinderance to the Muslim loyalty to Islam.<sup>32</sup> Since the Ahmadiyya was established in Lagos in 1911 it had advocated Western education. The Ansar-Ud-Deen society founded in Lagos in 1923 also became very vocal. Other associations that advocated the need for Western education for Muslims were the "Muslim Association of Nigeria, the Naiwar-Ud-Deen Society, the Ijebu Muslim Friendly Society and the Isabatu-deen Society which found a secondary school for girls."<sup>33</sup>

An important aspect of Islamic development in the post-Kiriji period is the development of information system - namely the Press. As early as the 1930s, Muslims apart from the government press, became desirous of their own press in order to air their views on the multifarious issues affecting their existence. They also wanted to provide literature for mass teachings of the beliefs and practices of Islam. For example, the first press was established in Abeokuta in the year 1933. This was followed immediately by Sebotimo Press in Ijebu-Ode. Others include the Barika Printing Works in Ibadan, and Ogunbanwo Printing Works in Oyo. The growth of the printing press was remarkable. For example by 1953 there were at least 16 presses in Abeokuta publishing works in Arabic and Yoruba such as a "Guide to Prayer" which sold 5, 000 copies on the first edition and had several editions.<sup>34</sup>

Resulting from the acceptance of Western education, the press, and conscientisation of the Muslim masses, there arose the need to plan for the future leaders of the Muslim community. As a result, following the examples of non-Muslim youth strategies, the Muslim societies began to found their own youth organisations and fellowships, especially along the lines of Christian youth organisations. This then is an important intra-societal response. The Muslim youths began to see themselves as equals with their Christian counterparts and competition ensued.

The most valuable and active Muslim youth organization founded in the 1940s is the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (M.S.S.). It is interesting to note that the founding members were drawn from both Christian and Muslim schools - namely, Methodist Boys High School, Kings College, Queen's School, Methodist Girls High School and Baptist Academy, others are Eko Boys High School and the Ahmadiyya College, (now Anwar-Ul-Islam College). All these students attended the first plenary session in 1954. Through the efforts of youths like Lateef Adegbite and Shuaib Oloritun, the society's constitution was drawn stressing objectives which include Unification of all Nigerian Muslims; establishment of an Islamic Ummah ruled by the *Shariah*, study of the Quran and Arabic language; promotion of Muslim welfare and rights; and the propagation of Islam in and out of Nigeria.<sup>35</sup>

The society became so important in the community that by 1958, government functionaries and political party leaders were seeking its opinions on many national and inter-faith issues. Among the northern supporters then were the late *Sardauna* of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the NEPU leader, Mallam Aminu Kano and in the south, the strongest supporter was the late Alhaji Adegoke Adelabu, the N.C.N.C. stalwart. As a result of this rising influence of the society, it made tremendous contribution to

developments in Muslim community in particular, and Nigeria in general. Among their activities were the pursuit of higher education both academic and professional, Mosques building projects, publications of Islamic literature, organisation of vocation courses and Islamic seminars, National Annual Conferences and Islamic solidarity.<sup>36</sup>

## Conclusion

In this paper we have shown that during the Kiriji War years, various religious groups took sides on the basis of the tribal or ethnic commitment and solidarity. Religion was not used as a weapon of war. But various religious groups later used religion as means of bringing about peace through prayers and consultations. Secondly, we find that Islam in the post-Kiriji War era assumed very remarkable vitality. It set for itself the tasks of reconstruction, participation within a pluralistic religious society, and development of its own religious potentials. The note here is the willingness of the Muslim divines to advocate Western education, modern communication systems and the development of youth organizations. In all this undertakings, Islam received more strength and more prospects for the future.

The question at present is, to what extent will Yoruba Muslim heritage of tolerance and positive involvement in pluralistic society persist? Yoruba Muslims may continue to listen more and more to the Northern Muslim views of Islamic revival and reforms. If this is taken seriously enough, some religious fanaticism may be expected. This however, may be detrimental to the unity of the Yoruba-solidarity, cooperation and religious fulfilments.

## Notes and References

1. Akintoye S.A, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland 1840–1893*. Longman, London, 1971, p. 156.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 155  
Ayandele criticised the action of the Sultan of Sokoto as been unacceptable because he had ulterior motive. As both spiritual and political leader of Ilorin he had declared war against Ibadan in 1879" partly in sympathy with the aspirations of the Ekiti for independence and partly to revive old scores with a power that stemmed the tide of *Jihad* in the forties." But why the involvement of other Emirs? The main inspiration is the religious pluralisms of the Yorubaland. See: E.A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842–1914*. , Longman, London, 1966, p. 39.
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16. Webster J.B. A.A Boahen & H.O. Idowu, *The Growth of African Civilisation...* Longmans, London, 1967, p. 23.
17. Trimingham, *op. cit.*, p. 75–76.
18. Webster, Boahen & Idowu, *op. cit.*, p. 22–24.
19. See: Gbadamosi T.G.O., *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841–908*, Longmans, London, 1978, p. 160.
20. Interviews conducted between 1984–1985 show that although the Muslims have the alternatives of finding other solutions, e.g. health care in hospitals, the mystical orders are still wielding strong influence on society.
21. As example See: Ajibona Salaudeen Oladejo, *Tijaniyya Order in Oyo Division*,

Long Essay, Univ. of Ibadan., May 1976.

22. (i) Atiba – 1837– 1859 – Islamic resurgence.  
(ii) Adelu – 1859– 1875 - Islamic entrenchment  
(iii) Adeyemi Alowolodu I – 1875–1905 - complete establishment of Islam.  
(iv) Lawani Agogo-Ija - The first *Alaafin* to embrace Islam (1905–1911).  
(v) Siyanbola Ladigbolu I - 1911–1945 - flourished  
(vi) Adeniran Adeyemi II, Performed the Hajj.  
(vii) Gbadegesin Ladigbolu, 1956–1970- Generous to Islam  
(viii) Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi III. Performed Hajj for details of the kings of Oyo see: Adelowo E D. *Islam in Oyo and its Districts in the 19th Century*. Ph. D. Thesis, Ibadan University 1977., Vol. II, pp. 562–566. Appendix IV.
23. Oyerinde, N.D. *Iwe Itan Ogbomosho*, pub. Niger Press, Jos, 1934, p. 142.
24. Among the critics of Muslim - traditional relation was Asiwaju and the respondent was Syed Ameer Ali. See Asiwaju A.I. *Western Yorubaland Under European Rule*, 1889–1945. Longman, London, 1976, p. 215. Also see: Hughes T.P. *Dictionary of Islam*, Cosmos, New Delhi India, 1977, p.463.
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**SECTION D**

**The Political and Cultural Consequences**

## Chapter Twenty Eight

# Economic Development and Warfare in 19th Century Yorubaland

Deji Ogunremi

The political and socio-economic issues which characterised the late 18th century Oyo Empire and which ultimately led to its demise in the early years of the 19th century signalled the series of wars that could make it look to a casual reader of Yoruba history as if the 19th - century Yorubaland was in total commotion, devoid of any peace that was *sine qua non* to economic growth. Yet hardly anyone who is familiar with the existing literature on the history of Yorubaland in the 19th century will have an iota of doubt in his mind that political, social and economic activities were in full force, in spite of the wars. This chapter deals with economic developments in Yorubaland in the 19th century.<sup>1</sup> Since there is no dearth of material in this period of Yoruba history, it will necessarily rely not only on such traditional histories of Samuel Johnson and A.B. Akinyele,<sup>2</sup> but also on the works of modern academic historians.<sup>3</sup>

Before, during and even after the 19th century, farming was the main occupation of the Yoruba. It was the matrix in which other economic activities were set. The three essentials required for farming were land, labour and implements. In relation to labour arable land was abundant in Yorubaland. Every community controlled its land and usually the head of the community was entrusted with the distribution of farmland to whoever wanted to farm-freeborn or slave.<sup>4</sup> It was therefore unusual to regard any class of people as being landless because everyone had access to farmland for cultivation.

Before the 19th century, production of food crops pre-dominated over other economic activities. Initially, this was purely for subsistence. However, before the advent of the Europeans on the coast of West Africa in the 15th century market economy had developed. Productions from the farmland were mutually bartered and also exchanged for non-agricultural outputs such as natron, salt, horses and cloths and the production was widespread and geared towards trade. It was controlled by the simple economic law of demand-supply-price mechanism.<sup>5</sup>

Household labour, that is the man, his wife or wives, children, relations living with him, pawns (if any) and any other freeborn in his household, constituted the labour force working on the farmland. Besides, there were slaves, clientship labour as well as the labour force based on friendly and age-grade associations. The size of a man's cultivated farmland depended largely on the size of his labour force. For this reason accumulation of wives was a rational investment and "a numerous family of children, instead of being a burden, was a source of opulence and, prosperity to the parents."<sup>6</sup> With this labour force, farming thrived, harvesting and transportation were effected and food was plentiful and perhaps more than adequate to feed the rather small population.

The third essential ingredient to farming were the implements used for cultivation. "In Africa," according to Jack Goody, agriculture has meant hoe farming. In Yorubaland hoes of various sizes, cutlasses, axes and such others were crucial to the farmers. With the implements, virgin lands were prepared for cropping and they were also used for harvesting. For various reasons that do not deserve our attention here, no machines were used for production. The plough was not used either. However, it would appear that the simple technology met adequately the needs of the society.

Another aspect of the economy was the production of non-agricultural commodities. Among the most important industrial engagements was cotton cloth weaving. The growing of cotton, spinning, weaving and dyeing occupied the time of the Yoruba well before the 19th century. The Oyo and Ijebu cloths, for example, were among the best that were available for both local and long-distance trade. Other manufactured products included pots which were found throughout Yorubaland and which were essential utensils in every home. Woodwork, iron metallurgy, blacksmithing, bronze casting and quite a lot of others were important industries locally engaged in by the Yoruba.

Outputs were not just consumed by the producers but were widely distributed. Market places, road junctions, river banks, shady trees and road sides constituted centres of distribution. Caravans were moving markets and there were also town markets. Periodicity of market places was in relation to the population density among other factors. Whereas in the urban centres, periodicity could be daily, it could be every fortnight in thickly populated areas. Just as some commodities were exchanged locally, some, especially non-perishable products such as cloths, were traded on long range.

Transportation of produce on short and long distances was by human porters on routes that criss crossed the whole of Yorubaland. Originally created by hunters as footpaths, the routes became lifelines through which foodstuff, industrial products, ideas and cultures were channelled from one place to the other within and beyond the country.

Various types of currencies were used to replace the barter system. The means of exchange ranged from strips of cloth for less significant materials to slaves for more important ones. From about the 16th century, however, cowries became very popular. Apart from the problem of portability, the cowrie had the qualities of a money. It could be saved, used as a measure of value and a means of exchange readily acceptable for business transaction. Indeed, the cowrie was a currency not only of Yorubaland but of West Africa and it was used up to the end of the 19th century.

The foregoing is a brief survey of the basic economy of Yorubaland and, in fact, of West African Communities. The economic activities described were not limited to the pre-19th century, they were also basically true of the 19th and 20th centuries. The economy never stagnated. As the population increased and demands changed, the mode of production and distribution also changed. These changes were apparent in the 19th - century economy in Yorubaland and they were due to both external and internal factors which we shall now examine.

The beginning of the 19th century marked the beginning of the end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade which had been going on for about 300 years and which had sapped the population and had devastating effects on the African States. Gradually, trade in slave changed to trade in palm produce, cotton, ivory and other commodities branded



'legitimate.' It is well known that this change in trade was mainly in response to the economic revolution in European Countries. The British merchants who had been the greatest carriers of slaves discovered that it was no longer economical to trade in slaves especially as there was a greater demand for palm oil as an essential ingredient for lubricating machines and for other purposes.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the legal abolition of the slave trade in 1807 meant an upsurge in the production of agricultural commodities and a general boost of the economy towards external demand.

Internally, there were also some important factors that led to changes in the economy of Yorubaland in the 19th century. Perhaps the most important of the factors was the warfare that pervaded the entire country. Structurally, the economy remained substantially similar to what had prevailed before the warfare largely determined what to produce and how to distribute it. Productions of agricultural products such as foodstuff and palm oil and war-related materials such as iron weapons were boosted. Involvement of slaves in large-scale production of palm oil and other products became rampant although small-scale producers who depended on their household labour were still many.

However, it would seem that there was hardly any part of Yorubaland which was not affected by the series of wars that spread spontaneously from one part to another in the 19th century. Some of these wars were aggressive against the Yorubaland while many others were domestic wars. Among the wars of aggression were the Dahomean attacks on the western parts-Abeokuta, Ketu; the Fulani invasion of the northern frontier - old Oyo; the Benin onslaught on the kingdom of the east - Owo, Ado, Akure etc; the Nupe hostility against the north-eastern section - Akoko, Kabba districts and the European belligerence against the southern states - Lagos, Egba and Ijebu.<sup>9</sup> These aggressive wars spread over the whole of the 19th century and stimulated inter-ethnic, internecine warfare. Among the domestic wars were the Owu War, the Ibadan expansionist wars, the Ijaye War and the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War.

This paper is concerned with the ways in which the wars affected the economy of Yorubaland. In this connection some of the pertinent issues include the development of agriculture, credit productions and trade. As described above, all had existed elaborately before the 19th century. There is no reason to suggest that agriculture, trade or any other economic activity was declining although the growth rate which is difficult to determine, might be gradual.

The economies of West Africa have always been responsive to changes and had responded favourably to external influences. The response of the West Sudan including Katsina, Kano, Borno and even Old Oyo Empire, to an extent, is an important case in point. It was therefore not new that the Yoruba economy was stimulated by external influences, that is, the European demands and supplies.

The demand for palm oil, in particular, by the European merchants stimulated the production of that product immensely in West Africa. Normally, palm oil was produced in Yorubaland for home consumption. In such a situation, the household labour was adequate. But with an unprecedented large volume of production, a large labour force was required. To solve this problem the Yoruba resorted to using slaves on a large scale.

In this regard, a clarification is necessary. It should be realized that slavery is indigenous to Africa and not a 19th century phenomenon. Slaves have always been

used for economic purposes.<sup>10</sup> Even during the slave trade era, 16th to 19th centuries, not all slaves were sold away. Quite a good number worked on farms and traded for their masters. But unlike the plantation slave in the Americas, they were not usually cruelly treated. Indeed, the good ones among them were treated like the freeborn and could, in fact, be elevated to high status over and above the freeborn. When the slave trade was effectively abolished, especially in the second half of the 19th century, almost all slaves procured in West Africa were employed within the region for economic pursuits. This in itself contributed in a large measure, to the general economic development of the region in the 19th century.

The 19th century wars in Yorubaland, however, contributed to the acquisition of slaves in great numbers. This is not to say that the Yoruba wars were fought for the purpose of acquiring slaves. This opinion held by Europeans observers and subscribed to by some writers has since been demolished. It is now well known that the issues of the wars were primarily political or economic regarding questions of balance of power. Neither were the wars undertaken without serious thoughts given to them. As Smith has noted:

Warfare was undertaken by the Yoruba with deliberation. Only after lengthy discussion in the councils of the kingdom, exhortatory speeches to the troops, and sacrifices to the war standard did the army move out to the vicinity of the enemy. Thousands of war-captives were acquired and many were bought in market places and employed for warfare and economic purposes.<sup>11</sup>

Among those who acquired slave and made use of them on their farmlands in Ibadan in the 19th century was *Basorun* Oluyole (1830s – 1847).<sup>12</sup> He must rank among the greatest farmers of his time not only in Ibadan but also in Yorubaland. The often-quoted passage which summarises Oluyole's contributions to agricultural development can be repeated here:

Oluyole was fond of husbandry; he had extensive plantations of Okra, beans, vegetables. Corn and yams, on separate farm for each, and whenever he had to take any to the market, no farmer was allowed to sell that particular article that day as he had sufficient to supply all the traders in the town, and could undersell any farmer.<sup>13</sup>

Through the effective application of manure he produced the biggest yams in the town. Besides foodcrops, *Basorun* Oluyole produced kola nuts. He owned "nearly all the kola trees in the town as well as the kola groves, and often offered human sacrifices in them in order to make the trees fruitful."<sup>14</sup>

Likewise, *Balogun* Ibikunle (1851–1864), Momoh Latoosa, the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo*, the commander of the Ibadan forces in the Kiriji War up to 1886 and Madam Efunseyitan, the *Iyalode* (woman-head-chief) of Ibadan under Latoosa, were among the greatest owners. Yet, there must be "thousands of budding Latoosas and Efunseyitans all over the Yoruba country."<sup>15</sup> In fact, *Balogun* Ibikunle has been described as the owner of many farmlands and of a wide expanse of farmland.<sup>16</sup> He had a large compound of about 500 people, comprising slaves and dependants who worked for him.<sup>17</sup> The same can be said of Latoosa whose compound was even much larger than that of Ibikunle and whose wealth which was based on farming was immense.<sup>18</sup> Also both Efunseyitan of Ibadan and Madam Tinubu of Abeokuta were renowned business women who employed thousands of slaves to work for them. Madam Efunseyitan, for

example, had over 2000 slaves working on her farm. This made her so wealthy that Latoosa regarded her as his greatest rival in Ibadan.<sup>19</sup>

From the foregoing, it would appear that for at least three reasons warfare did not seriously hamper agricultural pursuits in Yorubaland in the 19th century. First, there was no standing army. In other words men did not devote their time to warfare alone. Whenever a war occurred the war chief called on their followers. Each war chief contributed his contingent to the general army. After the war every man went back to his farm and to other economic activities and the war leaders simply became civil and economic leaders. Even during the war it was not everybody that went to war. Those who were left behind went about their farming activities as well as the businesses of the people at the war front. For example, in 1861, the majority of the Egba soldiers were farmers or engaged in other peaceful occupations.

Second, wars were not fought all the time. Most campaigns came up towards the end of the dry season when there was less to do on the farm and when food was available. Neither did the campaigns bring farming to a standstill. As soon as the soldiers pitched their tent, they took to farming within the vicinity of their camp and cultivated foodcrops. Everyone appreciated the importance of growing foodcrops since no hungry soldier could be forced to the war front. Third, farmers were adequately protected while wars were going on. According to Samuel Johnson:

Whilst the hunters were in the forests and on the look-out for kidnappers, the farmers could work in their farms with composure and confidence...The men went to their farms well armed, and were ready for any emergency.<sup>20</sup>

In order to guarantee the security of farmers and the populace, towns were strongly walled. Within a walled city farming went on without interruption. The farms were planted with maize, cassava, beans and other crops. Fourth, immediately, a military operation came to an end, it was the usual practice to dismantle camps and for economic activities to ensue between the warring states.<sup>21</sup> Farmers could then do their work without any protection.

Trade which in any economy is the engine of growth can also be said to have developed to some extent. By its very nature, trade could not flourish in a tense or panicky atmosphere. The only trade that thrived in the time of turbulence was slave trade because at such a time of commotion, it was easy to capture people and sell them. Unlike agriculture which could be managed within an enclosure and within a particular time of the year, trade involved movement of commodities from producing to consuming areas and carried out all the year round. It was difficult to protect traders because it was easy for marauders to pounce on them, capture them and appropriate their goods.

It would then appear that two factors affected trade adversely and greatly reduced its contribution to the development of the economy. One was the insecurity of roads and the other was their blockade. Evidence on these two closely related issues so dominate our literature that it almost looks a platitude to repeat them here.<sup>22</sup> The insecurity of roads is an old phenomenon that is inseparable from the slave trade that had bedevilled African states since the 16th century. Deliberate raids for slaves were often carried out and anyone walking on the road could be a victim of slave raiders and marauders. This incident became further complicated at the time of unrest and warfare.



It probably reached its zenith in the 19th century. Since the time of the collapse of Oyo Empire the peace and order that prevailed on the roads became interrupted. The fear of the Fulani, the southward movement of many people and the wars that ensued inhibited free movement of traders and other road users. Many roads were deliberately left uncleared so that they looked neglected. But this created more danger for traders because the bushes near the road served as hideouts for kidnappers.

Blockade of roads was much more disastrous to trade and economic development in general than the road insecurity. It stemmed out of the strategy to control or monopolise trade by strictly controlling roads. Secondly, owing to the geographical nature of Yoruba country, the economy of the southern parts of the country complemented that of the hinterland. The hinterland north produced food crops, palm oil and slaves which the southern and coastal parts depended upon for consumption and trade. Most of the palm oil, palm kernels, cotton, cotton cloths, ivory and slaves that the Ijebu, the Egba and the others in the south exchanged for European salt, arms and ammunition, iron tools and other manufactured products were supplied by the Oyo, Ibadan Ijesa, Ekiti and others in the hinterland. This complementarity, a crucial advantage to the economy, was used as a weapon and strategy to maintain balance of power.

Since the advent of the Europeans on the coast of West Africa, trade in the interior of Yorubaland had been somewhat south-bound. Thereafter, the Yoruba began to concentrate on the production of commodities to meet the European manufactures in return. This gradually changed the structure of the economy. The European products stultified those of the Yoruba. European salt, textiles, utensil and war weapons *inter alia* replaced, to an extent, those of the Yoruba. Of course, European culture began to influence that of the Yoruba. The result is that the Yoruba of the hinterland relied heavily on those of the south, near the European merchants for their salt and war weapons in particular. At first, the Oyo, Ibadan and others had direct contact with the Europeans in Porto-Novo, Badagry and Lagos and exchanged their products with those of the Europeans.<sup>23</sup>

The Egba and the Ijebu as middlemen in this trade with the Europeans must have been doing such a small but lucrative trade that they did not wish to constitute themselves a barrier until later in the 19th century. However, with increase in population due to the abolition of the slave trade and with all other changes that occurred in 19th-century Yorubaland, productions and trade were bound to increase even without the wars. With the wars, some labour which should have been employed on production was diverted to war efforts and there was the desire to rely on European goods. Although, the traditional war weapons; bow, arrows and iron tools; were still being used for warfare, the European arms and ammunition were found to be more effective, more punchy and more readily available. European salt was also in greater demand. The Egba and the Ijebu through whom most of these commodities passed then realized their great strategic position in controlling the roads that led to the coast.

More specifically, the blockade of roads by the Ijebu and Egba right from the 1860s was directed against the Ibadan. They had become alarmed at the growing military power of Ibadan especially as from 1840 when it defeated the Ilorin at Oshogho. Ibadan did not stop at that but embarked on wars of expansion against the Ijesa. It had fought and defeated Ijaye and expanded to Ekitiland. In fame and territorial expansion it had aspired to match and even replace the old Oyo Empire. Undoubtedly, the Egba and,



later, the Ijebu who could not rival Ibadan in its military power and territorial ambition tried to stop its military and political growth. Besides, they wanted to prevent the people from the interior of the Yoruba country from competing with them for the interior of the Yoruba country for competing with them for the trade with the European merchants on the coast. Like all middlemen they had good reasons to monopolise trade with Europeans. Conversely, the people in the interior, especially the Ibadan who had to acquire arms and ammunition for their aggressive wars, wanted direct access to the coast.

Road blockades became so fundamental to the economy of Yorubaland in the 19th century that "we may well describe the wars fought by the Ibadan against the Egba and later the Ijebu as the wars of the trade routes to the coast."<sup>24</sup> Richard Burton has also noted that in Africa, "direct connection with the seaboard is a necessity... And those who can find no other direct road will fight till they can obtain access to the ocean."<sup>25</sup> Whenever the Ibadan were prevented from obtaining firearms they got into trouble. This factor was demonstrated in the Owiwi War and at Arakonga against the Egba. The Ibadan were "reduced to pelting the Egba with gourds gathered on the battlefield," and they also lacked the most modern firearms at the Kiriji War.<sup>26</sup> But for the fame and strategies that the Ibadan had acquired, the lack of firearms could have led to their defeat.

Supplies of other products, salt in particular, were also badly affected. Salt was very difficult to obtain in the 1880s because of road blockades. According to Johnson:

The price of salt rose so high that a pound could not be had for less than ten shillings when it could be obtained at all. Poor people therefore, could not even think of preparing their meals with salt; those who could obtain a few grains of it, ate their meals insipid, and then qualified the tastelessness in their mouths with the few grains of salt afterwards!<sup>27</sup>

In this way, economic activities and common men's pleasures were affected. The Ijebu also felt the adverse effects of the blockade.<sup>28</sup> It would appear that the Ijebu had with time concentrated more on trade and less on farming. They therefore depended on the people of the hinterland for their food and for slaves to work on their farm. Although the Ibadan lacked sufficient firearms they in no way lacked food as the Ijebu did. This was revealed to the Ijebu by one Omitogun, an Ijebu warrior who was captured by the Ibadan. After his release he returned to Ijebu-Ode, and told his people that food was plentiful and cheap in Ibadan. On the other hand, the Ijebu were experiencing shortage of food. The matter of food scarcity became so serious that the Ijebu appealed to their ruler, *Awujale* Fidiote, to open the road to the coast so that the Ibadan could carry food to Ijebuland. The refusal of *Awujale* Fidiote to open the road led to his rejection by the Ijebu. The *Awujale* who refused to commit suicide as he was ordered fled from Ijebu-Ode in January 1883. Immediately after he left, the road was opened.

The other people who suffered from the closure of roads were the Europeans. After the bombardment of Lagos in 1851, the British administration showed more interest in their merchants in Lagos. Also since the annexation of Lagos as a crown colony in 1861 the British government became more interested and concerned with the Lagos trade. They believed that if the Egba and the Ijebu had allowed free direct trade with Lagos by the people of the hinterland the volume of trade would be greater than what it was. One of the foremost Lagos administrators, Captain N.J. Glover, was particularly

known for his opposition to the Egba and the Ijebu because of their closure of roads and for his support for the Ibadan in their bid to carry food and produce to Lagos directly. Between 1869 and 1871, Glover explored the possibility of getting an alternative route - the Ondo road.<sup>29</sup> This was a circuitous route, taking a much longer time than the more direct routes. The advantage, however, was that it stimulated trade.

As stated earlier, the foregoing should not be interpreted to mean that trade came to a standstill owing to insecurity and closure of roads. No doubt, trade was highly reduced perhaps to a minimum level. Like farming, efforts were made to protect trade in various ways. One of such ways was that the traders moved about in large numbers. A caravan could number hundreds of traders. Consequently, marauders, pirates and kidnappers then found it difficult to disturb them. Besides, they were adequately protected by hunters and soldiers. One obvious disadvantage of this system was the slow speed it entailed. This is because the roads were narrow and sometimes hollow. What Europeans referred to as "Indian line" prevailed in Yorubaland, too, in the 19th century. Besides, the fact that it was difficult for one to overtake a person dictated the speed at which caravan moved. It was normal for the people at the rear, usually more elderly ones, carrying light load to shout, "E rin nle o" - "please, speed up." In addition, road users, including children, carried their loads. This also slowed down speed especially if the load was heavy. However, the caravan was also a moving market, buying and selling at resting places, ferrying stations, road junctions, market towns and various other places. Some of such places developed into towns.

There is no doubt that closure of roads had devastating effects on the economy but alternative roads were sought to get goods across to consumers. The most important alternative route to Lagos from the hinterland was the Ondo road already referred to.<sup>30</sup> Diplomacy was often used to get essential commodities like guns, gunpowder and salt through friendly towns or people. For example, the Ibadan had tremendous help from the Remo when the Ijebu blocked routes against them. Some Ijebu who lived in Ibadan also helped the Ibadan to procure these necessities. So also were the Egba such as Chiefs Dare and Ogundipe who smuggled firearms and salt to Ibadan.

More importantly to the economic development of Yorubaland, road blockade led to trade diversion and creation. While trade was diverted from areas where roads were blocked it was created in new areas through which alternative roads passed. A striking example was the eastern route which enabled the Lagos traders and the administration to trade with Ondo and the others in the eastern Yorubaland. This in no small measure helped the Ekitiparapo Society in its trading efforts. They were able to develop small towns such as Mahin and Aiyesan where they settled. As a result, "the Ekitiparapo Society became a powerful force protecting the lives and trade of its members..."<sup>31</sup> By using this route the Ekitiparapo were able to acquire firearms which the Ibadan could not get and which almost gave them victory over the Ibadan.

The wars had salutary impact on some members of the society. As it happens in any war all over the world, some people are bound to benefit. Among the few people who benefited from the wars in Yorubaland were the craftsmen who were involved in large

scale production and maintenance of war weapons such as swords, knives and daggers, slings, bracelets and iron clubs. Blacksmiths not only produced agricultural implements but also war weapons in great numbers. Charm makers (Onisegun) produced protection charms and curative drugs for soldiers. It was unlikely that any soldier went to a campaign without charms to protect him from the enemies or to give him courage to face them. When we realize that hundreds of soldiers went to the field at any given time, we should appreciate the volume of work that was before the craftsmen.

From the foregoing it is clear that the 19th - century Yoruba warfare did not totally stop economic development. There was no sector of the economy that was entirely neglected and, indeed, production of food, palm oil and some others thrived and flourished. Trade boomed to an extent.

However, when we examine labour utilization in the 19th century Yoruba economy, it would appear that much labour which would have enhanced greater economic development was diverted to war efforts. We have noticed that everybody did not go to the war operations and it was not all the time that soldiers were on the field. Yet we should realise that whenever there was a war, all productive tools would be down and war weapons up. These war interruptions certainly affected labour productivity. Farmers, craftsmen and traders left their work, producing nothing, during war operations. At that time, they were contributing negatively to the economic development of the country. Not only could they not be credited with any economic output, they, in fact, disturbed any economic activity. When a war was fought at the beginning of the raining season at the peak of planting, agricultural productions could be so disrupted that famine would follow.

Apart from the labour that was diverted to direct military operations, people got engaged in some other activities that were related to warfare. For example, most towns had to be encircled by walls and ditches had to be dug, all in attempts to provide security for the people. In some cases double walls - a high one and a low one - were constructed to prevent entry by the enemies. Camps had to be constructed each time there was a war. In all these, labour was not being employed for economic development.

It has been noted that the craftsmen were busy producing war weapons but not much of agricultural tools or other implements for economic development. The industries such as "silver-smithing, blacksmithing, smelting of iron, saddling, leather dressing - all of which provided the essential needs of the soldiers<sup>32</sup> flourished. The argument here, again, is that the craftsmen's output were not geared towards economic development. The fact that they were busy producing was not enough for development. They had to be producing for positive economic development.

Economic development of a country largely depends on local entrepreneurs - those who can take risks, invest, innovate and manage businesses. They must have the capacity to employ the other factors of production - land, labour and capital - optimally to achieve their goals. Such men were available in Yorubaland in the 19th century. They were responsible for whatever economic development took place. However, such people were few. Many others who certainly had the same qualities spent their energy



and time in planning and executing wars. By the social stratification of the Yoruba in the 19th century, a war chief was more highly ranked with all privileges than his counterpart in economic activities. A farmer, trader or craftsman who provided the needs of a soldier was not accorded much respect. Trading, in particular, was therefore left to women and children. Even decisions on economic matters were taken by the military with little participation by leading traders. Although the military leaders such as Oluyole and Ibikunle in Ibadan were also popular as farmers, more credits and privileges accrued to them as warriors.

Another crucial factor for economic development is capital accumulation and flow. In the 19th century, almost all resources were concentrated on warfare. The foodcrops that were extensively produced were meant to feed soldiers when theirs could not sustain them. The palm oil which was produced and which would have fetched a substantial income that could be saved and invested in economic ventures was wasted in warfare. It was exchanged mainly for arms and ammunition and not for economic development efforts. The wars were financed by the individual war chiefs. Therefore, "How long one could stay in the camp was determined by one's means."<sup>33</sup> War Chiefs, in turn, depended on their followers and relations; and special levies were often laid on farmers and traders for money and slaves to procure ammunition during war time. According to Akintoye:

And throughout the war, the economic demand on each war chief was great. Apart from the central store of arms and ammunition, each chief was still looked up to for supplies by his own men, and each chief's camp was truly an arsenal.<sup>34</sup>

Many war chiefs bought goods on credit from Lagos traders and at the end of the war even some rich ones still owed. Capital resources which would have been employed for economic development were diverted to warfare.

Lastly, it should be emphasised that economic development depended on peace. During war time, peace eluded the people, commotion, panic and uncertainty prevailed. As we have seen, farming, industries and trade only flourished to a small extent. To realize greater economic development, peace must not be sporadic, it must be continuous for years. In addition, technological advancement also depended on peace and security. In some other parts of the world, 19th century was an era of economic and technological development. But for the wars, the Yoruba country was also poised for this development.

## Notes and References

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Ibadan, this paper is on the impact of the wars on the economy of Yorubaland.

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18. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
19. Akintoye, *Economic Background*, p. 45.
20. Johnson, *The History*, p. 450.
21. Falola, *Political Economy*, p. 135.
22. Akintoye, "Ondo Road;" Kemi Morgan, *History of Ibadan*, Part Three, Chpt. 11, "War of the Egba Trade Route to the Coast," pp. 22-38.

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## Chapter Twenty Nine

# The 19th Century Wars and Yoruba Royalty

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Before the 19th century, politics in Yorubaland revolved around the king (*Oba*) and his council of chiefs mainly with civil duties. The king (*Oba*), in particular was highly esteemed, greatly revered and constitutionally omnipotent. This fact is corroborated by the oft-repeated reference to him as '*Alase ekeji orisa*,' (the one in whom supreme authority resides, second only to the gods). The traditional political system had no prominent place for the military. This is probably a reflection of the facts that the Yoruba were not a bellicose group and that they, with the exception of the Oyo, did not develop strong military traditions. In many Yoruba states, what existed were paramilitarily termed *Ologun*, *Ogungbe* and *ipampa*.<sup>1</sup> They were usually not subjected to formal military training; rather, they were *ad hoc* groups mainly recruited from hunters and able bodied men in times of war and often quickly disbanded thereafter.<sup>2</sup> Seriously speaking, these were not professional soldiers.

Only in Oyo was there a body which approximated to a military caste. This was the *Eso* under the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo*. Even Oyo, with all the paraphernalia of an imperial giant it possessed, did not appear to have placed much social significance on the military.<sup>3</sup> The *Eso* was indeed a military aristocracy, but in the social reckonings it was not as important as the civil rank of the *Oyo Mesi*. As powerful as the *Eso* were, their duties were mainly for security as they played no political roles. Although some powerful warlords in the course of Oyo's history successfully exploited their local importance in the outlying areas of the empire to assert their overlordship over a village or town, in such cases, the content of their power derived mainly from association with the *Alaafin* and with Oyo-Ile.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the leader of the *Eso* though 'the greatest soldier and tactician of the day' did not reside in the capital and was therefore usually not party to most state policy decisions. It was the *Alaafin* who appointed the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo* and it became the convention for him to bestow the honour on some wealthy and troublesome personality to ensure his loyalty.

From Samuel Johnson's narrative, it would appear that the military were kept in check by a number of constitutional provisions. First, military titles were not hereditary. This made it fairly difficult for even those of them who became very powerful to become unnecessarily over-bearing in their attitude or social posture. Second, the military were placed under the control and strict surveillance of the king and his civil chiefs. In oyo for instance, the *Alaafin*, the *Oyomesi* and senior palace officials had personal control of individual *Eso* title holders. In all Yoruba states, the independence of the military was seriously curtailed by a constitutional provision which made it necessary for the king to give his blessings to all major military expeditions since *Ogun*,

the patron deity of all warriors, was also the royal deity of all major Yoruba kingdoms whose rulers were believed to have descended from Oduduwa.

Therefore, for all intents and purposes, the military aristocracy in Yorubaland was a passive one, used according to state policies by the king and civil chiefs. In fact, many of the prominent military leaders of Oyo up to the 19th century had substantial social background. Ojigi, who championed the westward expansion of the state was an *Alaafin*; Gaa during whose 'rulership' Oyo reached the zenith of its imperial glory was a *Basorun*; Afonja, the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo* during the 19th century holocaust was himself an *Akeyo* (Oyo Prince).<sup>5</sup> The indications are that these were men who rose to prominence largely because of their civil social reckonings, even though the martial qualities possessed by each of them must have further boosted their prestige.

This changed in the 19th century which was characterised by a series of struggles for political supremacy among a number of states.<sup>6</sup> One of the dramatic effects of the chaos was a shift of emphasis from the monarchy to the military. During the century, the military were pushed into the fore-front of Yoruba politics. All political systems became military in nature. A number of states, ruled virtually by the military arose; these included Ibadan, Ijaye and Abeokuta. In addition, a number of powerful individuals with personal armies emerged as independent foci of power and authority. Professional militarism became a common feature of Yoruba society. By the middle of the century, this development had resulted in the rise of military leaders all over the Yoruba country. They had a group of trusted slaves and servants owing personal allegiance to them. These men were usually well-trained and took militarism on a full time basis unlike their pre-19th century predecessors.

The series of wars in central Yorubaland provided enough outlet for the new generation of warriors. Continual struggle for supremacy among the new states and economic considerations particularly the desire to control trade routes fuelled the already flaming embers of intra-ethnic rivalries and generated series of wars which made militarism the only lucrative occupation at the time. Owing to the series of wars which particularly eclipsed the central Yoruba country, more soldiers were needed and it became necessary for such men to take up soldiering on a permanent basis. The continual insecurity due to incessant menace from Dahomey in the west and the Fulani in the north further propelled the military into playing prominent leadership roles. This negatively affected the position of the kings and their civil chiefs. All over Yorubaland, able military leaders were given the mandate to build up strong personal followings. In practically all Yoruba states, periodical expeditions were organised by warrior princes and valiant individuals. In Oyo, this was the golden age of the *Eso* who suddenly found themselves being allowed to take on more responsibilities and initiatives than tradition allowed them. Toyeye, Edun, Ojo Amepo and Kurunmi were successive *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo* encouraged by the *Alaafin* in a career of uninhibited militarism.

With the rise of military aristocracy, the institution of kingship and the traditional constitution underwent a radical change. This is particularly true of new settlements which came in the wake of the 19th century crises.<sup>7</sup> People began to question the significance of an institution that could not protect them in times of crisis. The well-known example of Ibadan where military republicanism evolved is a case in point. There emerged powerful warrior personalities such as Oluyole, Ibikunle, Ogunmola, Latoosa



and Ajayi Ogboriefon who rose to prominence not by the possession of beaded crowns, but of swords and guns. Even in areas where the monarchical tradition was too strong not to be reckoned with, the warriors constituted themselves into a supra-body of advisers enclosing themselves with an aura of arrogance which made it evident that they, and not the kings, had the solution to the problems of the period. With this, they were able to influence the politics of their localities. These men were all capable youngmen whose principal credential for the leadership role they were called upon to pay was not a noble or royal birth but an enviable military career which impressed not only the local indigenes but contemporary visitors. The profile of Ogedengbe recorded in 1886 by the Peace Commissioners sent to Yorubaland by the Lagos Government is representative:

Ogedengbe, who was of humble birth, has raised himself to his position of commander-in-chief of the Ekitiparapo confederacy entirely by his own exertions and by his successes as a general in the numerous expeditions held against the tribes bordering on the Ekiti kingdoms, and he is at the present time the most powerful man in the Ijesa and Ekiti countries, the kings themselves doing what he advises them. Remarkably boyish in manner and restless in his movements, he had, at the sametime, evidently a very good opinion of himself, and quite appreciated the high position he held in the estimation of both friends and enemies.<sup>8</sup>

Suddenly, military successes became significant and were attributed to individual military leaders rather than to the king or the state to which these men belonged. Such military successes offered a number of military advantages which, as will be evident presently, raised the ego of the military more than that of the other classes. Although the newly assumed status of the military was an aberration on normal conventions, the people did not protest throughout. What with the attendant insecurity, continual external invasions and rampant man-stealing activities? The crowned rulers were reduced to miserable and pitiable conditions.

Although traditional rulers continued to co-exist with new aristocracy, certain factors prevailed for most of the 19th century to make a mockery of the beaded crown. A new political consciousness emerged and the power of the traditional rulers diminished. In various areas, power, authority and influence crystallised around powerful soldiers who dictated the pace of politics in their localities. The observations of W.H. Clarke on the *Orangun* of Ila is germane.

If there is a being that deserves our pity and sympathy; it is the unfortunate one whom the ravages of time have reduced from opulence and power to a state of poverty and penury. Such seemed to be the condition of the monarch of Igbomina... the power of royalty is lost and the kingdom exists only in name. The very countenance of the man proved to me his energy was gone and... it appears that the wounded spirit within his heart will hurry him to his grave.<sup>9</sup>

However, up till c.1860, in spite of the fact that the monarchical principle had been seriously undermined, royalty still commanded some respect as the military continued to see themselves and their roles as secondary to those of their kings and states. Even with the military power of Ibadan, the chiefs continued to recognise the *Alaafin* as their *Oba* and never made an attempt to obtain a crown or to install a king in Ibadan itself even though they could easily have done so. The career of many of the kings in the first

half of the century made the monarchical institution still credit worthy. Aṣiba succeeded in re-establishing the grandeur of Oyo royalty in his new capital.<sup>10</sup> Abeweila the *Ooni* of Ife till c.1850 was able to bring some stability into the kingdom and put it on the path of military expansionism.<sup>11</sup> In Ijebu-Ode, Abeokuta, Ilesha and Ado-Ekiti, extant traditions indicate vigorous attempts by the kings to live up to expectation, adapt the monarchical institution to prevalent circumstances and make royalty responsive to the needs and aspirations of their people.

The military themselves, though evidently more powerful, for sometime continued to look at the kings with circumspect and respect. For instance, even when they wanted to get rid of a king, the military found it very difficult to lay their hands on him. An interesting instance which probably characterised the spirit of the time is recorded by Rev. Samuel Johnson.<sup>12</sup> When, during the Erumu War, Ibadan soldiers captured the *Oluroko* of Erumu, the *Onido* of Idomapa and the *Olowu* of Owu, they immediately eliminated the former two, they being of lesser status than 'crowned heads.' With the *Olowu*, a king belonging to a senior segment of the 'Oduduwa family,' they had some problem. He was regarded and treated with so much reverence that none of the warrior chiefs would dare order his execution. His death was brought about in a diplomatic manner which even filled the Ibadan with so much guilt that they had to undergo fairly complex rituals as an expiation for their guilt. There are even indications that as powerful as Ibadan was in the early 1870s, her chiefs still continued to treat the crowned heads with respect and persistently looked for royal validations for their actions by making their grievances known to prominent kings before embarking on, for instance, major expeditions.<sup>13</sup>

But in the course of the 19th century, the image of the kings had sunk so low that by the last quarter of the century the military no longer felt any qualm to make direct assaults on traditional rulers whether crowned or not. The first signal for this was the victory of Ibadan troops over those of Ijaye in c.1862. In fact, with the refusal of Kurunmi to recognise Prince Adelu's candidature as *Alaafin*, there began an unfortunate trend of the military disagreeing violently with their kings. This disagreement exposed the dependence of the *Alaafin* on the military; for it was the military at Ibadan that eventually rescued the *Alaafin* and aborted the crisis which Kurunmi's objection would have precipitated.

The victory of Ibadan in the Ijaye War paved the way for militarism. The privileges enjoyed by war chiefs and their agents like the Ibadan *Ajele* encouraged militarism. The encouragement of the *Alaafin* to Ibadan to legitimise the aberration on normal convention, which his selection represented, and the destruction of Ijaye by the Ibadan must have convinced the military at Ibadan that an aberration was not wrong after all. It is conjectural, but it may well be true, that with the destruction of Kurunmi, the Ibadan were prodded on by the fact that the *Alaafin*, their king, was in effect not properly constituted and could be discountenanced with if they so wished. From then on, Ibadan continued to perpetuate all sorts of aberrations on normal Yoruba conventions. The military excesses of its leaders knew no bounds as its dominance gradually extended over other parts of Yorubaland, bringing in its trail an unprecedented contempt for many aspects of Yoruba traditions.

The monarchy as an institution suffered most. Ibadan chiefs, filled with an audacity they could hardly exhibit in the days of strong traditionalists like *Aare* Kurunmi of Ijaye

began to order crowned heads and suddenly discovered, as one would put it in modern parlance, that 'the sword was mightier than the crown.' The contempt of the age<sup>14</sup> for Ibadan attitude as mirrored by Owa Agunloye in 1882:

Kakanfo (*Aare* Latoosa of Ibadan) is no crowned king; Ibadan is only a city of refuge for all ruffians. I believe crowns were placed on all heads of us kings by God and not by *Kakanfo* who are daily in the habit of taking them from our heads.<sup>15</sup>

Without restraint, crowned heads were subjected to Ibadan *Ajele*<sup>16</sup> who reviewed their activities, scolded them and imposed arbitrary punishments. The Ibadan usurped the prerogatives of royalty and took over all major functions of the local rulers. What is more, the issue of who would be king in all her vassal states was always decided in Ibadan; and the Ibadan took any opportunity to install their stooge in complete disregard of local feelings or opinion.<sup>17</sup>

The Ibadan 'experiment' in wanton destruction of royal sanctity re-echoed in virtually all parts of Yorubaland where local war leaders simply constituted themselves into local villains. By the 1870s, even the relatively pacific states of the Ekiti country had started to imbibe the military tradition, obviously an aftermath of Ibadan imperialism.<sup>18</sup> The Ekitiparapo kings were to lament to the Peace Commissioners in 1886.

For a very long time, all of us have been groaning under the grievous yoke of Ibadans. Some of our towns were laid in ruins two, three or four times, many of our kings and chiefs and principal men were cruelly murdered. Many of our people have to redeem themselves twice or thrice from Ibadan masters. Our country presents a scene, of woe and we were all in the most hopeless condition.<sup>19</sup>

The fact is that, by the time the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War broke out in 1878, many Ekiti settlements had been reduced to ruins not only by the Ibadan, but also by the Edo, Nupe and the Fulani based at Ilorin. This explains, for instance, why some of the 'sixteen traditional Ekiti kingdoms' such as Ise, Ado, Emure and Akure, could not take active part in the war. The crowned heads of these states had become puppets and being constantly in flight, had little or no followings or to use the lament of a contemporary ruler, were reduced to "rulers of grass and wood."<sup>20</sup> The inability of these rulers to outgrow local parochialism, petty rivalries and jealousies prevented any concerted opposition to the 19th century imperial forces. The story was the same in different parts of Yorubaland. In fact with the exception of Ibadan and Ijebu which appeared to have maintained some territorial stability in the period, all Yoruba states in the last quarter of the 19th century had their rulers reduced to petty kings. In response to the demands of the time, a number of local war heroes such as Aduloju, Arimoro, Fajembola, Faboro and Ogedengbe had emerged. But these, rather than protecting their people or re-establishing the grandeur of royalty, had turned into free looters adding to the woes and misery of the common man and his king.

The traditional rulers had no answer to the problem posed by these men as they could not control them.<sup>21</sup> Thus, these men continued massive destructions so that in many places, only tales of woes in the hands of these war leaders are now remembered about the period.<sup>22</sup> Many Yoruba settlements in the years before 1877 appealed to powerful war leaders outside their own locality to defend them against their more powerful neighbours. The kings had also at times, felt relaxed and used them to fight their wars, some on purely personal and petty excuses such as the *Deji* of Akure's instigation of



Ogedengbe's attack on Ise in 1875 to avenge the seduction of his wife. The warriors had seized the opportunity to constitute themselves into terrors feared by everybody including the kings. The prominence given to the military leaders had significant effects on the status of the kings. By the last quarter of the 19th century, many military campaigns were carried out by the military leaders without obtaining the traditional blessing of a crowned ruler. That these men carried out such expeditions successfully and without any rebuttal from a king or any providential repercussion must have hardened their minds and further encouraged them to embark on such daring independent actions. In any case, these expeditions immediately produced two related results both of which further enhanced the prestige of the military at the expense of that of the kings. First, the war leaders often returned from the expeditions with much booties making them very wealthy and in command of large personal followings. Second, the kings looked at them as the major source of income since the traditional sources from which revenue flowed into the royal court had been substantially diminished as a result of the chaos. Thus the military became the prop of the kings' wealth and could not be called to question. For instance before the outbreak of hostilities between the Ibadan and the Egba in 1877, the Ibadan leaders informed the kings of Ilorin, Ijebu, Ife and Ilesha of their grievances and would not have embarked on war if one of these had arbitrated in the matter. Instead of doing this, the kings jumped at the opportunity of sharing in the booty of Ibadan raids.<sup>23</sup> By partaking of the booties and instigating military expeditions, the kings increased the power of the warriors and were responsible for the shabby treatment they received from them.

The urge to capture slaves, not necessarily for trade, but to work on the farms and do all sorts of menial works enhanced the prestige and wealth of the warriors at the expense of those of the kings who, in most cases, depended on the pittance the warriors were prepared to offer them for state duties and even for their personal up-keep. Since the kings could not go out to raid, they had lesser wealth, privilege or largess to distribute; their affluence diminished and with it their personal followings. On the other hand the continual warfare gave the military the opportunity to increase their wealth. During the wars, they often looted property and acquired slaves. In fact, the motive of acquiring wealth appears to be the underlying factor in their career. What, for instance, was Ogedengbe doing with his soldiers encamped at Ita-Ogbolu; or Aduloju with his boys in the Ekiti and Akoko countries? Many of the war leaders became rich beyond ordinary means, and the places in which they settled though traditionally constituent parts of the older states ruled by crowned heads, had become, like Ibadan, "through their numerous successful wars, too rich and independent to be treated as ordinary tributaries."<sup>24</sup> The military simply became overbearing in their attitude. Talking in the context of the late 19th century *Aare* Latoosa of Ibadan mirrored the spirit of the age when in July 1877, he refused all entreaties not to declare war on the Egba; for to him the war was "a task which God has allotted me to do, and those who say they shall see that I do not accomplish it will not live to see it done as done it shall be."<sup>25</sup> As an *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo* the traditional constitution demanded that Latoosa should obtain the blessings of the civil authority in Ibadan and the ultimate approval of a sovereign ruler, in this case the *Alaafin* of Oyo, before embarking on such a major military expedition. Latoosa's haughty reply to Ibadan chiefs can only mean that as the war leader, he conceived himself as the ultimate ruler. His declaration that it was 'God' who sent him



to war could only mean that he saw himself as next in rank to god, a position hitherto reverently reserved for the crowned kings.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, a combination of factors further negatively affected the status of Yoruba kings. The first was the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War. From contemporary evidence, there is no doubt that the relations between the military and the kings deteriorated rapidly between 1879 and 1886.<sup>26</sup> The fact is that with the traumatic experience of the early 19th century, the reactions of most Yoruba *Oba* and the traditional nobility in general, reflected the aspirations of the military leaders. Thus the initiative as to what policy to adopt in the crises years was, in almost all states, taken by the military. For instance, it took the initiative of Fabunmi, the warrior prince of the little known chiefdom of Imesi-Igbodo to form the Ekitiparapo alliance. It was also the military leader in each locality who decided which Ekiti state eventually joined in the armed insurrection though all of them shared the aspiration of freedom from Ibadan imperial rule.

In the course of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War, the image of the Yoruba kings took a rapid downward trend. In all the states involved in the war, the military were in control and they dwarfed the image of the traditional nobility. They dictated the tempo at which the war progressed. The actual formulation of war policy became their prerogative; and in places where the *Oba* and the traditional nobility were reluctant to toe their line, they often precipitated crises. This was, for instance, the situation in the Ijebu Kingdom which resulted in the exile of the *Awujale*, Fidiopote; in Ife where the military made it impossible for 'Derin Ologbenla to be installed *Ooni* and in the eastern Yoruba country where the military leaders such as Ogedengbe influenced the choice of kings and principal title holders.<sup>27</sup> Even though many kings were involved in the procurement of arms and ammunition for the execution of the war, as well as in the negotiations for peace from c. 1882, the initiative in almost all cases was always taken by the military. For example, it took the initiative of the *Aare* and Ibadan chiefs before the *Alaafin* began his peace moves in 1879 and 1882. It also took strong entreaties from Latosa before the *Ooni* - elect agreed to attempt a settlement of the conflict. The kings in the attempt to extricate themselves from the unwholesome situation they found themselves resorted to a series of diplomatic manoeuvres which further complicated the issues,<sup>28</sup> and only tarnished their reputation as credible negotiators. In the circumstance, the war-weary people were prepared to give the mandate to a new corps of negotiators, the Western educated elites and the military who continued till the 1890s to dominate the political scene.

One of the developments which accompanied the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War was the rise to prominence of Western educated elites.<sup>29</sup> From c. 1883 these men entered the political scene in Yorubaland and continued after 1886 to play crucial leadership roles which were traditionally the prerogatives of the kings and their chiefs. Being literate, fairly wealthy and based in major urban centres like Lagos and Abeokuta, they had access to the Press and to officials of the British Administration. Being 'westernised,' they commanded the respect of the war leaders and a cross-section of the indigenes in their locality. Following the Peace Treaty, many of such men who were forced to flee the hinterland as a result of wars returned to their home countries. In the years immediately preceding the formal imposition of British Rule these Westernised emigre promoted peace in the interior by encouraging the spread of British influence

particularly the cultivation of cash crops and the adoption of Christianity.<sup>30</sup> In many communities, the emigre became the spokesman of their people and the medium of their communities' communication with the outside world. In this wise, the kings and chiefs in the interior used them to write and read letters to and from the government and, more importantly, used them as advisers on virtually all imminent issues. Thus the emergence into prominence of the Western educated elites contributed to the progressive corrosion of royalty.

The attitude of the British Administration to the wars also contributed to the corrosion of royal image. Although the Lagos Administration showed some monarchist tendencies it pursued a seemingly anti-monarchist policy. For instance throughout the war period, it inadvertently subverted the kings' policy of appeasement by insisting that the military leaders must be involved in the negotiations for peace.<sup>31</sup> This spirit of accommodation demonstrated by the Lagos Administration and its agents indicate that the British approved a fuller participation for the military in traditional politics. It was to be reflected in the Treaty of Peace and Friendship which bore the signature of no less than ten military leaders out of a total signatory of 24.<sup>32</sup> In fact, as the Ijebu were to point out to Samuel Johnson in November 1886, the Peace Commissioners had been so unduly influenced by the military that the Peace Treaty was dommed from the moment it was signed because it was not concluded within the provisions of traditions. Johnson wrote:

One of the king's councillors, speaking for the rest, said... that the Commissioners have done their best, but that Ogunsigun's counter influence have turned the scale; Modakeke... should not leave their town... all that should be done in a native point of view was to reconcile the Modakeke with the Ifes and to threaten the Modakeke, that should any complication arise between them in future, of which they are the cause, the whole country will be against them.<sup>33</sup>

The presumption is that the Lagos Administration in an attempt to see an end of hostilities allowed the military to virtually dictate the terms of settlement. In the months following the signing of the Treaty, the Administration's attitude to encourage trade and discourage warring activities was such that British officials showed very little sympathy to the survival strategy adopted by the kings to enhance royal prestige or to those war leaders bent on pursuing the hostility to its logical ends. Thus while Fred Evans, the acting Administrator of Lagos in January 1887, was advising the Ibadan to be magnanimous as they 'would be doing much more for their country if they were looking after the farms, making palm oil and country cloth instead of fighting' and *Seriki* Ogunsigun to 'act properly and return quietly to Ijebu-Ode', he could not understand why the *Awujale* should, on account of a dispute with the Epe, close the Ejinrin market 'where a very large number of Lagos people' traded.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed from September 1886, the military having discovered that the Lagos Administration, in spite of its monarchist pretences, did not fully support royal ascendancy in Yorubaland, were encouraged to operate in the spirit of the pre-1886 years. For example, the military did not disband in 1886,<sup>35</sup> and were able to remain in the centre of Yoruba politics. Although on 23 September 1886, the main war camps at

Imesi/Igbajo had been broken up, fighting continued at the two other fronts - Ofa and Ife. In both areas, the military continued to operate in the spirit prevalent during the Kiriji War years with disrespect to royalty and utter disregard to instructions from the civil authorities. Thus at Ofa, in spite of the pressure from the *Emir* of Ilorin, *Balogun Kara* resolved to raise the seige again Ofa only on his own terms. So open was the difference of opinion between the *Emir* and Kara that it did not escape the notice of virtually all visitors to the Ofa camp.<sup>37</sup> At the Ife front, the Ekitiparapo continued to maintain their presence even after their contingent was withdrawn in January 1887.<sup>38</sup> All over Yorubaland, armed camps existed in strategic locations. The cream of the Ibadan army which withdrew from Igbajo was still encamped at Ikirun, presumably to back up their contingent at Ofa. Similarly, the Ekitiparapo army was not disbanded in September 1886 but merely withdrawn to the town of Imesi-Ile ostensibly to keep watch on Ibadan activities. There was also the powerful Ijebu contingent led by *Seriki Ogunsigun* who set up a patrol post on the Ife/Ijebu border.<sup>39</sup> In addition, garrisons were stationed in virtually all areas identified as potential centres of trouble. This armed presence, as Akintoye rightly points out, were "rumblings of war"<sup>40</sup> which indicate that the services of the military were still required.

The military however conducted themselves in a way which indicated that they would be adaptive to changes demanded by the Peace Treaty. This, in itself, was the result of the fact that they had other influential groups to contend with in the power politics; these were the Western educated elite, the Christian missionaries and the British Administration in Lagos. Thus in spite of the fact that tension still existed, there was a general desire for peace and an aspiration that the 1886 Treaty should be given the chance to succeed.<sup>41</sup> For instance, the little peace that was achieved at Ife was due to the personal influence of Isola Fabunmi and the Ekitiparapo representative at Modakeke after January 1887.<sup>42</sup> Also, from 1886 to the 1890s, the Ibadan vigorously promoted the demands of the Peace Treaty. In these years their peace initiatives were such that they achieved, by pacific means, what they had sought to achieve through wars since the 1840s.<sup>43</sup> From 1886, they frequently sent out envoys to diffuse tension in places where it still existed.<sup>44</sup> In fact as Akintoye points out, the impaired image of Ibadan improved tremendously and peaceful intercourse developed to such an extent that "frequent exchanges of communication and friendly gestures between Imesi-Ile and Ikirun made the possibility of misunderstandings very slim."<sup>45</sup> To the ordinary citizens, the implications of these were that the military in peace times could still be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the common man.

In the same way, the encampment of the Ekitiparapo War leaders at Imesi-Ile pushed them, rather than the kings to the fore front of politics in the post-Kiriji War years. Even though some of the Ekitiparapo kings were resident in Imesi-Ile they were mere weaklings in the hands of the war hawks particularly the emigre group led by James Gureje Thompson<sup>46</sup> and the radical soldiers. On most occasions they relied on the war veterans to take the initiative on crucial issues<sup>47</sup> thereby keeping them influential in politics.

It is not surprising therefore that in spite of the Peace Treaty, Yorubaland continued



to experience critical problems of peace, principally as a result of the activities of the warriors. Presumably with the connivance of their leaders, gangs of restless war boys caused widespread disturbances ravaging farms and perpetrating all sorts of atrocities including brigandage and man-stealing. A few examples will suffice to indicate that the war leaders who were prominent in signing the Peace Treaty were vicariously culpable for the various acts of atrocities which made the Yoruba country unsettled till the imposition of British Rule.

In 1887, Fabunmi returned to Imesi-Igbodo and constituted himself into the *de facto* ruler of the town in total disregard of the traditional nobility in the locality. The nuisance of his soldiers and his non-conformist attitude led to a crisis which, boomeranged leading to his expulsion from the town. Even after his expulsion, Fabunmi put himself at the head of a group of war boys who constantly disturbed the peace in Imesi and adjoining areas until c.1895.<sup>48</sup> Within the core of the Ijesa Kingdom, Ogedengbe, in spite of his strong inclinations towards peace, could not bring about the much desired peace. His war boys became notorious for the plunder of the countryside and created an atmosphere of perpetual panic.<sup>49</sup> In Ilesha itself, Ogedengbe easily became an alternative focus of attention placed higher than the *Owa* and the traditional nobility.<sup>50</sup> So notorious was his reputation that the *Lagos Weekly Record* in a powerful editorial on 14 October 1893 condemned him as the 'unproclaimed king of the Ijeshas (who) sways the sceptre of Ijesha land elbowing royalty into a corner... (and having) one thousand wives by and through whom he procures exorbitant fines and indemnities.'<sup>51</sup> It is probably with some relief that the Ijesa nobility accepted his arrest in 1894,<sup>52</sup> even though they were to plead for his release two years later. At Imesi-Lasigidi, Aduloju from c. 1881 had constituted himself into a military aristocrat living virtually on the plunder accumulated by his war boys in the Akoko and adjoining areas.<sup>53</sup>

The kings and the traditional nobility made protests about the activities of the war leaders. But until the mid-1980s the British, not yet willing to get fully involved in hinterland affairs,<sup>54</sup> failed to respond satisfactorily. Between 1886 and 1890, despatches to Lagos vividly portray that the kings interpreted the British handling of the affairs in the Yoruba country as being partially in favour of the military. This to some extent, was justified because even where local civil authorities adopted measures which were calculated to drastically reduce the influence of the military, they did not receive the expected assistance from the British. In fact in many places whenever the military leaders were criticised, they merely withdrew to the countryside and regrouped to continue their military career. Up till c.1893 therefore, the Yoruba *Oba* were unable to identify the main line of British policy as regards their position *vis-a-vis* that of the military. This is not surprising for, in fact, the British had no clear-cut policy on the issues of royal status until the introduction of the Indirect Rule system in the 20th century.

In the circumstance, in view of the indifference of British officials in Lagos to extricating the kings from the woes and increasing inability to curtail the activities of



the military, they adopted a policy of political accommodation by seeking to give the military chieftaincy titles which would give them civil status commensurate with their militant posture. The plan was to place the prominent war leaders under the traditional elites by integrating them into the existing hierarchy of chiefs. Initially, the military were not agreeable to the type of political rearrangement which the kings sought. This is quite understandable. The new chieftaincy titles would present the military with a diminished sphere of influence since they would have to operate within the traditional norms of the communities where they had taken titles. This would curtail their military activities and opportunity to accumulate wealth at will. Also, most of the titles offered to the military were non-hereditary ones which, on their death, could make their family revert to the lowly social status from which they had been raised by their individual military activities in the preceding decades. Thus the military were generally reluctant to be lured to accept civil chieftaincy titles. Nevertheless they remained prominent in local politics for mutual distrusts continued among the different Yoruba sub-groups and tension still existed in many areas.

But following acts of intimidation against prominent war leaders most of who were arrested, the military were forced to accept that a newly structured pattern of political relationship was desirable. It was then that they started an attempt to have their war time posture legitimized by traditions. Thus, for instance, Ogedengbe became the *Obanla* and Ogunmodede the *Lejoka* of Ilesa; Fajembola was given the *Olugbosun* chieftaincy title in Oye; while Aduloju was offered the *Edemo* chieftaincy title in Ado-Ekiti. However by the time the military were making efforts to get incorporated into the traditional political system, the British had decided to intervene on the side of the kings and restore royalty to the position which they believed it occupied before the 19th century holocaust.

## Notes and References

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4. Cf. the case in Egbado, Folayan K. "Egbado to c.1832; the birth of a dilemma" *JHSN* 4 i, 1967 pp.15-33.
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13. "Statement of the Ibadan Chiefs" in *Accounts and Papers*. 12 Vol. LX 1887.
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15. CO.147/48/Stat O. "Statement by His Majesty King Owa Adumila Agunloye at Ijebu Ere, 12th Jan. 1882."
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45. Akintoye S.A., *Revolution and Power Politics op. cit.* pp. 189–190.
46. *Ibid* pp. 196–197.
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## **Chapter Thirty**

# **The Legal Implications of the 1886 Treaty**

**'Wale Ajayi**

Neither the Kiriji War nor the Peace settlement of 1886 was the first ever among the Yoruba people, but the written Peace Treaty<sup>1</sup> (hereafter the Treaty) was an innovation in the unlettered but legally sophisticated Yorubaland. Another significant issue was the mediatory and 'arbitral' role played by the then British 'brother monarch' (through her agent, the Governor) from the coastal town of Lagos. A beneficial consequence of the Peace Treaty is that it provided a non-controversial permanent record for use, thanks to the efforts of the Christian Missionaries who inspired and installed the whole peace process.

This paper analyses the legal effects of the Treaty in three parts. The first part is a preliminary analysis of the legal regime of the Treaty; the second part is an interpretative analysis of it whilst the third examines its current legal implications.

### **The Legal Regime of the Treaty and status of the Parties**

There being no merit whatsoever in denying that the Yoruba Kingdoms were 'states'<sup>2</sup> at International Law and possessed a well developed legal system and legal jurisprudence. The only relevant inquiry is that of determining whether the treaty was concluded in whole or in part under English Law, International Law, Yoruba Customary Law or African Customary Law<sup>3</sup>. There could be no question of the Treaty being concluded under English Law because at that time British suzerainty and legal jurisdiction was yet to be exercised over the Yoruba states of the interior. Indeed as late as 1903 Governor MacGregor was reported to have declared that:

in the administration of Yorubaland, British hands were tied by the 'network of treaties' with the indigenous rulers, some of which recognised the independence of some of the states, and none of which could serve as a pretext for direct administration.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, not being conversant with the English Law or Legal system, it is trite that belligerents in Yorubaland neither intended to nor did they in fact conclude the peace settlement under English Law.

Likewise, there could be no question of the Treaty being concluded under Classical International Law the subjects of which i.e. the Western Powers, denied them of any status under the Law<sup>5</sup>. We must not be taken to subscribe to that view which denied them International Personality because there had been contact between African communities inter se and with Europeans and agreements were concluded and embassies exchanged etc. This led an eminent jurist, Dr. Teslim Elias to observe that such relationship entailed the observance of certain practices in the field of diplomacy, the rules and practices of warfare, treaty-making and patterns of international behaviour

and international morality (which led to the evolution of) a universal body of principles of African customary law that is not essentially dissimilar to the broad principle of European Law<sup>6</sup>. The fundamental principle of *pacta sunt servanda* (Agreements must be kept) was common to the Classical International Law, and to African Customary Law<sup>7</sup>. It is not surprising therefore that an analysis of the peace negotiations as well as the Treaty reveals striking similarities between the two systems.

It is our view that the Treaty was concluded within this African customary Law tradition. Nevertheless, it amounts to the same thing that it was concluded under Yoruba customary Law which shared in this respect, (i.e. Law of war, and treaties), generally identical characteristics and rules.

Since war is no respecter of racial barriers, most of the Law of War is based on considerations stemming from an *ex aequo et bono* approach or what is desirable at equity or from the view of humanity. There is great similarity in the legal treatment of wars and hostile disputes all over the world. This was why the British Governor of Lagos was in no way handicapped in superintending the peaceful settlement of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War.

We cannot however, apply in whole or in part, except only for purposes of comparison, the rules of Customary International Law (which in any event are modern) in analysing the treaty. It is submitted, therefore, that the legal regime that governed the treaty is Customary Law. It is trite that Customary Law essentially being unwritten must be borne on the breast of its expounder. Being ourselves unschooled in the customary law of war among the Yoruba and lacking any record of the detailed canons of African Customary Law the writer would have to ascertain, as an issue of fact, the rules of the applicable law. Happily this is not necessary because the concept that parties must keep their agreements is part of the Customary Law and a treaty being akin to a contract under municipal law, all we really need to do is to interpret it and analyse what obligations the parties imposed on themselves.

### **Status of the Parties**

The Kiriji War occurred at a time when the influence of Oyo was practically non-existent. Whereas in its hey days a significant section of the parties were in one form or the other under the influence of Oyo Kingdom. But with little or no International Personality, by the time the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War started, the political configuration had changed as many states hitherto subordinate to Oyo had become sovereign in all issues, including relations with foreign bodies. For instance, kingdoms like Egba, and Ilorin, had become independent of Oyo. The Ijesa and Ekiti states availed themselves the opportunity to fight a war of self determination. Ibadan on the other hand admitted the political overlordship of Oyo Kingdom. Igbajo, Ikirun, etc were unfortunate pawns in the whole war strategy and the subject of conflicting claims of suzerainty by the Oyos and the Ijesas. The Modakeke were in the war as Oyo and subject to Ibadan military and political authority.

The list of countries, in the attestation column of the Treaty creates an impression that all the belligerents were independent states. This, as we shall see was not so. But for the Ijesa and Ekiti it marked or formalized their complete independence from Ibadan domination. The position of Ibadan is a bit anomalous. Although she did the bulk of the fighting, she was not a sovereign state and therefore legally was fighting on

behalf of the Oyo people whose overlord, the *Alaafin*, was apparently indifferent to the outcome of the war and in fact sponsored an unsuccessful peace initiative<sup>9</sup>. It would appear that the militaristic Ibadan had over the passage of time become subject only to the *de jure* but not *de facto* sovereignty of Oyo Kingdom. The Kiriji War and Ibadan's important position as co-chief belligerents marked her complete independence from the formal sovereignty of the Oyo Kingdom. Ibadan's gain of Igbajo, Ikirun, etc., territories was a significant pointer to this fact.

Curiously, the Modakeke were neither in a position of insurgency, nor alleged domination by the Ife. Yet, at the end of the war and according to the Treaty, any claims to right over Ife land were summarily dismissed. They had the choice to stay in Ile-Ife as tenants of the Ife or move out to become house-owners in the adjoining settlements. This anomaly is revealed by the fact that Modakeke was signatory to the Treaty.

## Analysis of the Peace Treaty

### Parties

The parties to the Treaty are named as the *Alaafin* of Oyo; the *Balogun*, the *Maye*, the *Abese*, the *Agbakin*, the *Otun Bale* of Ibadan; the *Owa* of Ilesa, the *Owore* of Otun, the *Ajero* of Ijero, the *Olojudo* of Ido, the *Seriki* of Ilesa, the *Ooni* of Ife, the *Obalufe*, the *Obajiwo*, the *Obaloran*, the *Ajaruwa*, the *Arode*, the *Arisanre*, the *Balogun* of Ife; the *Ogunsuwa* of Modakeke, the *Balogun* and *Otun* of Modakeke, the *Awujale* of Ijebu and the *Balogun* of Ijebu.

The rule among the Yoruba Kingdoms was that the *Oba* was solely responsible (no doubt in consultation with the Chiefs) for the conduct of foreign affairs.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, *Baloguns* were military men who were kept away by strict convention from the civil aspect of the government. No doubt in order to put a check on over-ambitious military Generals. With the exception of the *Seriki* of Ilesa who is recorded to have arrogated treaty making power to himself<sup>11</sup>, the *Obas* were accorded the position (albeit somewhat titular) of Head of State and Chief of the Armed Forces.

The conclusion to be drawn is that the Treaty represented a modification from strict state practice owing to the overbearing influence of the military chiefs and the need to evolve a strategy that would break the recalcitrance of the war chiefs. Indeed, the Kiriji War had shifted the balance of internal power to the war-chiefs who were seen as saviours and defenders of their people, for defeat would have led to harsh and brutal methods against either of the parties. The account of the influence and power of the *Seriki* of the Ijesa, and the way he ordered the Ekiti kings to sign the Treaty is eloquent testimony and justification for this assertion. Apparently, it was a wise move in view of the disposition of power within the kingdoms to give greater recognition to the war chiefs who therefore came in for specific mention. Ibadan was in fact governed in its civil sphere by *Baale*, a subordinate chieftaincy, in no way regarded as of royal status by the Yoruba. Perhaps for them it did not matter who signed. The fact, however, that her leaders were co-signatories with the *Alaafin* reveals the merely formal nature of the sovereignty purportedly possessed by the *Alaafin*.

### The Preamble

The two issues that merit attention are the phrases "(the parties) are desirous to put a



stop to the devastating war which had for years been waged in their own and adjoining countries" and "(the Queen shall) mediate between them, and to arbitrate".

The impression given by the first phrase is that all the parties were of independent status but it appears that the Modakeke were under the *de jure* sovereignty of Ibadan. The Ife are also recorded as having once come under the influence of Ibadan, although the universal regard of Ife as the ancestral home of the Yoruba meant that no one purported or dared to be seen as subjecting, or being party to the reduction of Ife to a tributary or vassal status.

The point of interest in the second phrase is that the preamble reveals that the British Governor who drew up the Treaty was using concepts of Mediation and Arbitration under classical International Law<sup>12</sup>. This could never, however, have made the Treaty subject to classical International Customary Law. These juridical concepts and dispute settlement institutions are, however, not unknown to the Yoruba legal jurisprudence<sup>13</sup> and their acceptance without any demurral testified to the sophistication of the Yoruba people and their legal jurisprudence.

The point of significance however, is that the language of that phrase puts it beyond doubt that the English Monarch was regarded as a neutral brother Monarch and not as a political overlord.

## Clauses

Clause 1 bound the belligerents to cease from fighting, restore peace and friendship, return into and remain within their territories and to submit to such necessary or expedient directions for better and more effectually securing the object of the Treaty.

Clause 2 declares that 'the Kings, chiefs and peoples comprising the Ekitiparapo alliance or confederation as well as the *Bale, Balogun, Chiefs*' and Ibadan people shall retain their independence.'

This clause gave legal recognition to the independence of the Ekitiparapo kingdoms and chiefs from the Ibadan (Oyo). The clause also gave the stamp of legal recognition to the independence of Ibadan from the Oyo Kingdom - an independence won because of their military exploits.

Clause 3 declared the independence of Ilesa from Oyo but conferred on the *Alaafin* a figure-head seniority over the *Owa*. Figurehead in the sense that it merely went to protocol. It did not detract in any way from the *Owa's* and *Ijesa* sovereignty over their territory.

By means of clause 4 the towns of Otan, Iresi, Ada and Igbajo were awarded to Ibadan and were to form Ibadan territory. By this Ibadan became the only party to have made territorial gains from the war. Although, the ostensible rationale of Ibadan's need for the war was to preserve Oyo supremacy, yet it was Ibadan and not the *Alaafin* who benefited from the war.

Clause 5 declared that "in order to preserve peace the town of Modakeke shall be reconstructed" on land beyond the borders of Ife territory. They were to remove to land between Osun and the Oba river "where such of the people of Modakeke as desired to live under the rule of the *Bale* and *Balogun* of Ibadan shall withdraw from the present



town to the land mentioned" in a manner and at a time directed by the Governor or his agents.

The clause provided a modification sub-clause that "such of the people as desire to live with the Ifes shall be permitted to do so but shall not remain in the present town of Modakeke, which shall remain the territory and under the rule of the king and chiefs of Ife, who may deal with the same as they may think expedient".

In effect, this clause gave the Modakeke an opportunity to end their occasional feuds with Ife and to have their own land, although under the political authority of Ibadan. On the other hand such of the people (and eventually for a while the whole of Modakeke) as chose to remain in Ife territory were to be Ife subjects and to move from their location to any place or places within Ife territory as the *Ooni* and Chiefs thought expedient. Due to the logistical problems of moving the whole town within six months, the Modakeke refused or failed to remove from Ife and both populations lived together, the Modakeke showing industry and loyalty until on 27 March 1909 the town was broken up.<sup>14</sup>

Clause 6 provided that the respective parties, save as provided otherwise were to retain the boundaries they held as at the conclusion of the Treaty. This clause has an identical twin in the doctrine of *Uti Possidetis*<sup>15</sup> (continue to possess as you now possess) under the classical International Law, once more underscoring the similarity in the legal treatment of war universally. In a situation where a stalemate ensues this is the only viable policy because of the balance of forces.

Clauses 7 and 8 dealt with the mechanics of disengagement and withdrawal of the belligerent forces at Kiriji, Modakeke and Isoya under the supervision of the Governor, his servants or agents.

Clause 9 bound signatories to promote trade and commerce and to abstain from dissension and acts likely to promote strife. Similarly, clause 11 bound the singatories to cease from all war-like operations or acts of provocation.

Clauses 10 and 12 were designed to aid the enforcement of the Treaty. By the former, the parties agreed to submit to the arbitration of the Governor if any situation likely to result in an outbreak of disturbances should exist after the ratification and performance of the Treaty. Under the latter, the parties bound themselves to submit some of their leading chiefs as hostages during the disengagement process.

The Treaty was ratified by the Principals with effect from 23 September, 1886. It is of secondary interest as it dealt, apart from the provisions applying to Modakeke, with details for the disengagement of the armies from the battle fields.

### **Validity of the Treaty**

From all accounts, all the parties to the treaty understood the terms of the Treaty, sent their accredited representatives as messengers to the Governor and ratified the Treaty by signature, voluntarily. There was neither fraud, nor any unlawful intimidation brought to bear on the parties.

It is true that the Treaty was in writing and even sealed, but this does not detract from its nature as a mere piece of paper evidencing the agreement reached by the parties, notwithstanding the legal overzealousness of the British Governor.<sup>16</sup> The Yoruba had been making binding agreements among themselves before the British came and the fact that this Treaty was neither made nor drawn up according to strict Yoruba custom is a matter of form and irrelevant technicality.

### **Current Legal Implications of the Treaty**

The first consideration is that the parties to the Treaty have lost their sovereign status, being now merely administrative units within the territory of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Any legal claims, (if at all existent), exist only at the pleasure of the legislature of the state. Nevertheless, the Treaty has meagre legal significance. The Treaty determined territorial boundaries, for instance, with regards to Ibadan and Ife. The Land Use Act<sup>17</sup> which vested the ownership of Land in State Governors has removed from communities ownership rights over community lands. Nevertheless, the persons in physical possession retain rights of occupancy in the Land. In effect, Oba no longer possess unfettered power to exercise rights in or over unallotted community land.<sup>18</sup> This does not mean however, that tenants defeat the title of their Landlords and become the holders of rights of occupancy in leased land. Then landlords title to the right of occupancy continues to subsist. According to Ademakinwa J. in *Akande & Anor v. Alade & Ors.*<sup>19</sup>,

It could not have been the intention of the legislature to endorse illegal occupation of land.

The clause (i.e. no.4) that puts certain towns under Ibadan rule has quite obviously been superceded by the fact of Ibadan itself having been divested of its political authority as an independent state by virtue of colonisation and the erection of the Nigerian state. Likewise, those towns ceased to be part of Ibadan territory owing to the above reason and the introduction of the Indirect Rule System under which the *Alaafin's* political authority was given a boost<sup>20</sup>, as well as the creation of the Native Authority system of grass root administration.

The situation of Ife is different since the territorial issue is wholly internal to Ife. The only other legal effect the Treaty may have is to serve as evidence of the Customary Law with regards to claims as to who has the customary right to act as prescribed authority over the appointment of traditional rulers in allegedly subordinate territories.<sup>21</sup> Since, however, Customary Law is not static it cannot be asserted that the state of the law as at 1886 is the current state of things. Indeed the effect of the indirect rule system of the British colonialists, whereby the *Alaafin* was given political authority even over Ibadan whose independence was declared by Clause Two of the Treaty, as well as the subsequent chieftaincy legislations and declarations have rendered this issue merely of historic interest.

### **Overview**

We have examined the text of the Treaty with a view to discovering the intention of the parties as expressed by the Treaty. It has been assumed and shown that all the signatories were aware of the terms and implications of the agreement and that it was

intended to affect legal rights and so was made with an intention to create legal relations. How else can such important aspects as alteration or confirmation of territorial borders, declaration of independence be explained? The performance of the Treaty and the modification or otherwise of the relations meant to exist by the Treaty, in actual practice are another thing altogether different from what this paper set out to do.

## Notes and References

1. See Johnson, *op. cit.* pp 527–532.
2. The chief argument was that there was no form of sovereignty in the “backward territories of Africa”. This could not be true of the Kingdoms of Yorubaland where the sovereign was the *Oba*, and the executive, political and judicial powers of state were exercised by him. Indeed this ignorant assertion was rebutted by the privy council in *Re Southern Rhodesia* (1919) A.C. 211 at pp. 215–216. See Okoye, *International Law and the New African* (Sweet and Maxwell 1972) p. 1–5.
3. Elias, *African Law in sovereignty within the Law* (1965) p. 220.
4. Adewoye *The Judicial System in southern Nigeria 1854–1954; Law and Justice in a Dependency* Longman 1977) p. 53
5. See Okoye, *Op. cit.* p. 5.
6. See 4 above
7. Okoye, *op. cit.* p. 4
8. Johnson, *op. cit.* pp. 41, 67–68.
9. Johnson, *op. cit.* pp. 462–497.
10. As sovereign this fact is rather obvious see Johnson, p. 513.
11. Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp 533–534, see also p. 532.
12. For a fuller discussion see J. Stone, *Legal Controls of International Conflict*, p. 67, Bowett. *The Law of international institutions* (3rd ed.) p. 231.
13. These institutions or modes of settlement of disputes are as old as the history of man in civilisation; see Sanwarzen berger - *Manual of International Law*, p. 195.
14. For a full account of the Ife-Modakeke see Johnson, *op. cit.* pp 536, 552–560, 640–641, 646–648.
15. This applies except to the extent to which the Treaty otherwise provides. See J.G. Starke *Introduction to International Law*, – 606.

16. Since the signatories did not make the Treaty under English or classical International Law, there was no way in which the Treaty could have been any thing but a mere evidence of the agreement.
17. No 14 1981 Law of the Federation of Nigeria.
18. The character of this power is well set out in James, *Modern Land Law of Nigeria*, (Ife Press 1973) pp. 35–36.
19. Suit No. HOS/59/80 Oyo High Court decided on 31st January 1983.
20. See Johnson S., *The History of the Yoruba op. cit.* pp. 643–655. Also Atanda J.A., *An Introduction to Yoruba History*, IUP, 1980 ch. 7.
21. See the Chiefs Law cap. 21 Laws of Oyo State 1978, Section 4.



## **Chapter Thirty One**

# **Demographic Effects of the 19th Century Yoruba Wars**

**G.I.O. Olomola**

### **Introduction**

The 19th century in Yorubaland witnessed an unprecedented frequency of wars with attendant turmoil, loss of lives and properties and large-scale displacement and movement of beleaguered people. The Afonja Wars of the first decade of the century, the Owu and Egba Wars of the third decade, the wars of the 1870s; the Egba/Ibadan conflict, the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo Wars as well as the effort of the Iyagba, Ijumu, Owe, Akoko and Ebira to terminate the Nupe domination of their countries, dragged on invariably till the last decade of the century. As R.S. Smith rightly contended, the period was not one of mere conflicts but also of political, social and economic changes.<sup>1</sup>

A panorama of population in Yorubaland during the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th will reveal changes in the population distribution of its regions. A glimpse of the population distribution of Yorubaland about 1800 should give a picture of relative population density spread over most of the hinterland. One of the most important impacts is the shift in population distribution that went on during the wars and in their aftermath. During the wars, mass movement of people took place and a different picture began to emerge from the 1830s.

### **Urbanisation and Population before 1800s**

Virtually all who have come in contact with Yorubaland agree that it is 'a land of towns' of various population sizes.<sup>2</sup> One of the earliest indications of the population of a Yoruba kingdom recounted the hey-days of old Oyo when its soldiers marched over a tough hyde placed at the city gate, such was the numerical strength of the army that the footsteps of the marching soldiers generally wore out the hyde by the time they had marched past.<sup>3</sup> This could only be a folklorish indication of the multitude of Oyo soldiers and of the relative density of the population of the kingdom. Hugh Clapperton who travelled across western Yorubaland and passed through Badagry and Old Oyo at the beginning of 1826 remarked that the population of the Yoruba communities along his route was relatively dense and the towns were a few kilometres apart. He claimed that he counted 35 towns of between 5,000 and 20,000 inhabitants and about 60 smaller communities, between Badagry and Oyo-Ile.<sup>4</sup> In the 1850s Miss Tucker of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) similarly reported the prevalence of a large number of Yoruba towns, "the larger ones" containing sometimes between 60,000 and 70,000 inhabitants and "the villages" with 3,000 or 4,000 people.<sup>5</sup> In the same 1850s the Revs.

T.J. Bowen and H. Clarke of the Southern American Baptist commented on Yoruba urbanization and gave impressionist estimates of the population of Lagos (20,000), Ogbomoso and New Oyo (25,000) Offa (30,000), Ibadan, Ede and Iwo (70,000).<sup>6</sup>

The general impression was (and still is) that Yorubaland was densely populated. The Hinderers who spent about two decades in Yorubaland in the 1850s and 1860s put the population of the Yoruba at three million.<sup>7</sup> However, this population was not evenly distributed. As Professor Akin Mabogunje opined, 'large towns were distributed almost uniformly except perhaps on the southeast,<sup>8</sup> which was largely thick forest; on the other hand the coastal and immediate hinterland areas were sparsely populated.'<sup>9</sup> "The sea shore was generally avoided and as Richard Lander observed in the early 19th century the farther one penetrated the Yoruba hinterland, the more dense the population."<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the hilly recesses and perhaps the areas subjected to incessant raids of the Nupe and the military activities of Edo warriors since the 16th century were presumably sparsely populated.<sup>11</sup>

Outside western and central Yorubaland frequented by 19th century European travellers, one cannot be exact about the population of other areas such as the Ekiti, Ijesa, Igbomina and Ife kingdoms. But from later comments by visitors, one can conjecture that some of these places also had fairly dense population, though, probably lower than what obtained in central Yorubaland. In 1857, Henry Clarke described Ilesha as 'a little inferior to Yoruba proper (Oyo)<sup>12</sup>. This might mean that Ijesaland contained smaller number of inhabitants than (New) Oyo Kingdom or that Ilesha was not as large as Oyo in population. In this document dated 1862, Jose Meffre asserted that there were 9,000 towns and villages in the 'Ijesa' country before Ibadan invasions.<sup>13</sup> Meffre's "Ijesa country" probably covered the entire eastern Yorubaland, even then, it is doubtful if one could speak of 9,000 communities, therein. However, the missionaries Bishops Phillips and Johnson who toured Ekitiland in 1894 commented on the remarkable number and contiguity of the communities, and reported that the towns and villages were hardly more than a few minutes walk from one another.<sup>14</sup> Thus, one can speculate that much of the present-day Ekiti central, Ekiti north and west, part of Ijamo forests, Ijesaland, Ife, northern Ijebu and Igbomina countries contained many towns about the population and size of some of their counterparts in central and western Yorubaland before the 19th century.

These Yoruba communities population were generally 'fluid' because despite the general belief that the people lived at peace with one another, conflicts and wars occurred. In addition, the rate of internal migration was high, with the result that the population of most communities were mixed; these increased as the states expanded or shrank following the series of wars in the 19th century.

### **Movement and Mixing of People in the 19th Century**

In the course of the wars of the 19th century, there was an unprecedented shift in population distribution or density as well as a great deal of mixing among the various sub-ethnic groups of the Yoruba.<sup>15</sup>

Usually, each Yoruba community consisted of a core of "aboriginal" population who were, in most cases, the earliest known settlers.<sup>16</sup> In contradistinction to all categories of later-day settlers, they were regarded as strangers, *ajeji/ajoji*. However, there was a great deal of internal migrations in Yorubaland over many centuries.<sup>17</sup> The

emigrants generally reported to some local authority and were led to the highest authority, often times the *Baale* or *Oba*, hence the folksaying, *ajeji kole wo 'lu k' onile ma mo* (no stranger element enters the town without its authority knowing). When induced to settle, the "strangers" were allocated land for cultivation and settlement, usually adjacent to the homeland of the hosts. The process of integration commenced with allocation of land and intermarriage and if things worked out smoothly, after a generation or two, the children of the settlers were recognized as *bona fide* indigene, *omo onile*. But, in special circumstance, especially where the individuals involved or the leaders were men of military, political or economic importance or where the followers were numerous; they were immediately fully integrated and incorporated into the existing political arrangement. This category of *ajeji* include aspirants who failed to obtain their desired political offices and those who desired new homes in order to escape from some insufferable condition or personal losses. The history of the various Yoruba communities is replete with instances of internal migrations of this nature.

Refugees were different from the ordinary emigrants. They were inhabitants of some homeland, displaced during wars, thrown into some anguish and forced to seek refuge elsewhere. The refugees generally settled among their host communities. The wars produced unprecedented number of refugees, with the community they moved into increasing in number as well as population size during the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> These 'accretion settlements'<sup>19</sup> include Ile-Ife, Osogbo, Iwo, Abeokuta, Epe, Ilorin, and Ogbomoso. Where the refugees arrived in waves or small fragments, they were accommodated among the hosts in their lineage compounds. But where the refugees were whole communities or large parts thereof, as was the case with Owu or Ijaye or some Ibarapa towns and villages in Abeokuta, they settled in separate but adjacent quarters of their host town and retained their separate identities. Thus for instance, in Ikere, large refugee populations from Ado and Ijero kingdoms settled as separate but component sections of the town. They retained their old place names, their chieftaincy titled and totems. In Epe, Kosoko partisans settled side by side with their hosts but overwhelmed them by sheer number and set up their own administration.

Another category of "refugee" settlements are those like Sagamu, Ago-Iwoye, Akure and Igbo-Ora in which some towns or villages banded together as a single town for greater guarantee of security. In the case of Sagamu, many towns<sup>20</sup> moved into Ofin in the 1890s and called themselves Sagamu. similarly, about seven towns and villages are said to constitute Ago-Iwoye while the settlements of Isikan and Isolo moved from their old homelands into Akure; and some six villages of Pako, Igbole, Iberekodo, Sagunun and Igbo-Ora came together as Igbo-Ora during the 1840s.<sup>21</sup> As in the preceding category, in each case, the component communities retained their separate identity, name, title and totems.

Slaves constituted a different category of *ajeji/ajoji*. The 19th century wars produced a large number of captives. Probably fewer people were killed than were captured in the wars. Thus, large number of people and prisoners of wars were often times led away as slaves. Many of these were often sold into slavery to masters within a few kilometres from their homes or to distant places within Yorubaland and/or to non-Yoruba communities.

It is not difficult to form a picture of the volume of slave traffic and the number of



slaves in Yorubaland during and in the wake of the 19th century wars. Meffre asserted before the British authorities in the 1880s that Ijesa communities lost considerable proportions of their population to the Ibadan, claiming with apparent exaggerations that towns like Iperindo with some 9,000 inhabitants and others of some 50,000 inhabitants were reduced to only 20 "houses".<sup>22</sup> J.D. Y. Peel suggests, with documentary evidence, that the population of Ilesha at the end of the Ekitiparapo-Ibadan War was about 5,000,<sup>23</sup> and painted a picture of the physical appearance of the town, in 1899 as consisting of "small huddles of houses (lineage compounds) separated by zones of overgrown vegetation."<sup>24</sup> During the Ibadan invasion of Ado in January, 1873, Iyin, a subordinate town lost an estimated 10,000 men, who appeared to have been led away as slaves,<sup>25</sup> judging by the large number of slaves *Aare* Latoosa released to Ewi Atewogboye at Ifaki.<sup>26</sup> Another source, credited to Rev. Smith mentioned an Ibadan campaign in "Efon country", a name often given to Ekitiland, where the conqueror led some 10,000 slaves away and later sold about 1,000 of these in Whydah.<sup>27</sup> In such circumstances, many villages in Egba, Upper Ogun, Igbomina, Ijesa, Ekiti, Iyagba and Akoko areas ceased to exist- the citizens having been led away into captivity.

A sizeable proportion of the prisoners of war were turned over as domestic slaves to their captors, or local authorities to whom they were usually given as prizes. This category of slaves were generally indemnifiable. Generally speaking, the female domestic slave sooner or later, ultimately became a wife, to a member of the ruling elite, or other freeborn citizen or even a fellow slave. Where they became wives to freemen, the offsprings of female slaves were free citizens and were eligible to their fathers' or lineages' privileges including chieftaincy titles. On the other hand male domestic slaves took longer time to fully integrate. Usually, only those of them with special talents and knowledge such as the use of herbs, and expertise in some art and crafts easily integrated.

Slaves, especially the well-to-do ones could and did redeem themselves, paying for their redemption from their labour and personal savings or rendering meritorious services for their masters. More often than not, slaves were redeemed from their masters and from slavery either with substitute slaves or by payment of money.<sup>28</sup> However, the vast majority of domestic slaves were not redeemed. Indeed, their whereabouts were not often known to their surviving kinsmen. In many cases, when the slaves were traced to, reported or located in their places of domicile, redemption was difficult to effect or was no longer desirable-especially where the "slaves" were already fully integrated, for instance, where they were married with children. There are numerous instances of descendants of war captives of Igbara-Odo in Ilesha, of Idoani in Ado, of Ado in Iwo, Ibadan and Sagamu, Emure in Ibadan; Oyo, Ijesa and Ekiti in Ijebu Remo especially Iperu.

An instance<sup>29</sup> is here cited for illustration: Omole and Aruleola, indigenes of Ado-Ekiti, had three children, namely Ojo, Borida and Anuodo. Two of these, Ojo and Borida were captured during an Ibadan invasion, and finally sold to Osu and Sagamu respectively. Much later, Aruleola knew the whereabouts of her two children but there is no evidence that she actually visited them. But the lone child left behind, Benjamin Anuodo located his brother and sister and established contact. Eventually in about 1947, Mr. Adebola Osiberu was posted to Ado as Health Superintendent and accidentally encountered Anuodo, his uncle. Greater intimacy has since developed.



The Osiberu family played their traditional role as kinsmen at the funeral of Anuodo in Ado in 1972. Mr. Adebola Osiberu behaved as a big brother, in fact, an uncle to Afolabi Anuodo, Benjamin Anuodo's eldest son. Afolabi honoured the Osiberu family: Chief Adekunle Osiberu, the Lisa of Makun, Adebola Osiberu and their children, with his presence during the funeral of Borida, his aunt in July, 1983 and led the Anuodo family members of Ado to the funeral of their uncle Ojo who was the Oloriawo of Osu, in September, 1984. Today Afolabi Anuodo is closely associated with some of the children and grandchildren of the Osiberu family of Makun, Sagamu, most of whom he knows by name and, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of Papa Ojo of Osu virtually all of whom he knows by name. Thus three generations or more of Papa Omole's children, grandchildren and great grandchildren know themselves closely-but the three families belong to three sub-ethnic divisions of the Yoruba, namely Ekiti, Ijesa and Remo.

The picture that emerged in Yorubaland between the 1850s and 1870s, had a few distinct features. The first was a comparative emptiness of large areas of northwest and north which Ilorin armies had ceaselessly ravaged for slaves and from where refugees flowed into New Oyo, Ogbomoso, Iwo, Ede, Ejigbo, Ibadan etc. The northeastern area of Iyagba and Akoko as well as the northern parts of Ekiti which the Nupe and Ilorin raided and subjected to imperial exactions, were relatively depopulated. Parts of central and western Ekiti as well as most of Igbomina and Ijesa communities where the Ibadan troops operated were also scantily populated, and a large percentage of the captives therefrom went to populate western Yoruba towns such as Iwo, Osogbo and Ibadan as well as Ijebu, Remo and Egba towns.

The second was the prevalence of new centres of military power and large population. Even in the early 1850s, Bowen's estimated population for Abeokuta, Ibadan and Ilorin were 60,000, 70,000 and 70,000 respectively.<sup>30</sup> Considering the various sources of slaves and refugees that "poured" into these and other important centres, it is instructive to note Governor Alfred Moloney's estimated population of the 1890s which put Ijebu-Ode, Ejigbo, Iwo, and Osogbo at 60,000 each, Oyo at 80,000 and Ilorin at 100,000.<sup>31</sup> These impressionist population figures, or guesses, appear relatively close to reality because they were clearly higher than the figure the Rev. Charles Phillips, gave to some Ijesa and Ekiti towns. Phillips in the 1880s put the population of Ode Ondo, just recovering from its debacle with Oke-Igbo, at about 1,500; Ijebu Ere at between 6,000 and 8,000; and Imesi-Ipole and Ikoro at between 5,000 and 6,000.<sup>32</sup> In the 1890s, Bishop Phillips, visited parts of Ekiti and Akoko and estimated the population of Igbara-Odo, at about 10,000, Uyin approximately 15,000 and declared simply that Ado was "one of the largest (towns) in Ekiti".<sup>33</sup>

The third feature, an imperceptible one, was the unprecedented mixture of people from their various homelands in Yorubaland; fragments of various sub-groups thrown all over Yoruba homeland, most getting absorbed into their new homes!

This picture of Yorubaland appears to have remained largely "stable" right up to 1911 when the first census was conducted by the British in parts of Nigeria including Yorubaland. The imperfections of this census by sex, apart, it did record a population figure of 175,000 for Ibadan, 73,766 for Lagos, 80,000 for Ogbomoso, 59,821 for Osogbo, 36,231 for Ile-Ife, 60,000 for Iwo, 51,255 for Abeokuta, 45,000 for Oyo, 33,362 for Iseyin, 26,577 for Ede and 36,342 for Ilorin.<sup>34</sup> The figures for other Yoruba

towns especially in the eastern parts are not available but one can use the relatively more documented but yet imperfect 1952 population count to drive the point home. The 1952 census shows that 120 out of 136 urban centres with a population of 5,000 or more lay in the western half of Yorubaland; this shows that only 16 of such towns existed in the eastern half.<sup>35</sup> In this same census, Ilesa ranked as the ninth largest Yoruba town; yet it was larger than "any town in Northern Nigeria except Kano or in Eastern Nigeria except Onitsha."<sup>36</sup>

A close study or analysis of the compiled census figures also confirms the relative density of the population of the western, and central parts and sparsity of the population of the eastern parts. In the compilation of population by province, Abeokuta had 630,000; Lagos Colony 505,000; Ibadan 1,650,000; Ijebu 348,000, Ondo 945,000, Oyo 783,000;<sup>37</sup> the Yoruba areas of Ilorin and Kabba Provinces, 389,673 (out of a total of 530,723 for entire Ilorin Province) and 110,325 (out of total of 664,037 for the whole Kabba Province) respectively.<sup>38</sup> Allowance must be made for situations created by the British colonial administration and the resultant growing number of non-Yoruba resident in Yorubaland and Yoruba residents in other parts of Nigeria. However, the breakdown of the census figures was by sex, that is male and female, and also by age. That is, the figures showed, province by province, division and parts thereof, those under 2 years old, those between 2 and 6, 7 and 14, 15 and 49 and 50 years and above.

This breakdown is very helpful for this exercise. The concern here is on those who were 50 years and above; it is very probable that most of them were alive during 19th century. The records show that there were 30,244 such men and women in Abeokuta province, 28,660 in Lagos Colony; 133,703 in Ibadan province, 38,080 in Ijebu, 67,687 in Ondo and 66,961 in Oyo provinces.<sup>39</sup> In Ilorin and Kabba Divisions there were 45,115 and 8,998 old people respectively.<sup>40</sup> One can see at a glance that the western portion of Yorubaland, from Ilorin to Abeokuta and Ijebu, even without the Lagos Colony had about 314,103 men and women aged 50 and above whereas the eastern half, from Kabba through Ife Division (which included Ila District) and Ijesa Division of Oyo province as well as the entire Ondo province had about 100,956 such old people, a figure that was much less than the figure for Ibadan province of only two divisions.

Of greater interest to us is the great influx and reflux of Yoruba people during the 19th and early decades of the 20th centuries. For, as soon as the British, acting through the Lagos government and its Resident, Capt. R.L. Bower and other political officers proclaimed a general amnesty and emancipation of slaves in 1894 and thereabout, the Yorubaland was astir with human movement. The proclamations caused a noticeable reflux of former captives back to their homelands notably in eastern Yorubaland. Peel has referred to such returns from Ibadan to Ilesa and Ekiti; from Ilesa to Ekiti, Akoko and beyond.<sup>41</sup> Of course, large numbers of slaves did return from Egbaland, Remo and Ondo to the northern parts such as Ibarapa, Igbomina, Ijesa, Ekiti and Akoko which were areas of earlier depredation. Asabia has spoken of some returned ex-slaves of Idoani origin from western Yorubaland and Ondo.<sup>42</sup> Such returned ex-slaves of *ado* origin were generally called *Atoyobo*, that is, returnees from Oyo.<sup>43</sup> The returned ex-slaves did not reduce the shift in population distribution a bit because, the vast majority were already fully integrated in their new homes and had become, to all intents and purposes, *bona fide* citizens.

## Conclusion

The amount of mixing among the various Yoruba sub-ethnic divisions can only be presumed. Mixing resulting from internal migrations predated the 19th century wars and had constituted the root/basis of the cultural homogeneity among the Yoruba-speaking people, duplicate place names, titles, religious beliefs and practices in Yorubaland. However, very few among the Yoruba elite are aware of the phenomenon of large-scale movement as well as the resultant mixing among the various dialect groups and parts thereof, for most of them have been responsible for, conjured and whipped up, parochial sentiments for selfish ends, thus setting the people apart. Yet, a lot of mixing had taken place with the result that several members of the present generation have grandparents or great grandparents who were from other, often distant parts of Yorubaland. Akintoye has observed "how little it is usually realised that each of the Oyo, Ekiti, Ijebu or any other Yorubas sub-group of today is really a synthesis of fragments from almost all parts of Yorubaland."<sup>44</sup> The present writer has heard praise-names and praise poems of deceased Ijebu which clearly assert their Ijesa origin; for some Ibadan citizens trace to Ijebu, Ekiti and Akoko roots etc. Many families and lineages in Ekiti have Akoko, Iyagba and Owo origin, while some Oyo lineages, especially in Okuku and Imesi-Ile have their origins in some Ekiti communities. Instances of this phenomenon are numerous among the Yoruba and could be directed to generally desirable ends.

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  28. As Oguntawo did with Majohunbo to obtain his captive wife from Ibadan. Oguntawo's wife was one of the several thousand prisoner-of-war led away into captivity by Ibadan during their invasion of Ado in January 1873. After the dust had settled, Oguntawo took Majohunbo, wife of a settler, Mosele, also led away into captivity, to Ibadan and used her as substitute to effect the redemption of his own wife. Often times, slaves were redeemed by payment of money, the price of a slave demanded by the willing master as Ewi Aladesanmi I did to redeem the said Majohunbo about 1908 from her master in Abcokuta. See D.A. Aladesanmi, *My Early Life: An autobiography*, Ado-Ekiti, Omolayo Press, 1977, p.13.
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## **Chapter Thirty Two**

# **Refugees in 19th Century Yorubaland**

**G. O. Oguntomisin  
and Toyin Falola**

### **Introduction: Wars and Proliferation of Refugees**

Endemic warfare in Yorubaland in the 19th century<sup>1</sup> left in its trail political chaos, large scale destruction of lives and property and massive population dislocation leading to the proliferation of refugees all over the Yoruba country. The wars that accompanied the decline and fall of the Old Oyo Empire blazed the trail. For instance, a major consequence of Afonja's secessionist wars and the Fulani attack was that many northern Oyo towns and villages were either destroyed or deserted. Prominent among such towns and villages were: Ikoyi, Iresa, Igbon, Imeri, Gbogun, Erubu, Osoogun, Esiele, Dada, Oki, Akese, Worwero and Oyo-Ile. The savanna area of Oyo territory that was persistently subjected to attacks witnessed unprecedented population movement. From here, refugees moved to the towns located in the forest regions and other naturally defensive sites such as hill tops.

Apart from the Fulani attacks, internecine wars fought by the Yoruba in the century contributed largely to the upsurge of refugees. Notable among these were the Owu and the Egba wars: Ijaye and the Ekitiparapo wars.<sup>2</sup> The Owu War, originally a contest between the Owu and the Ijebu resulted in a grand alliance of Ijebu, Ife and Oyo refugees against Owu. In the aftermath, Owu was destroyed and the allied soldiers invaded the territory of the Egba who were forced to concentrate in a new town called Abeokuta in c.1831.<sup>3</sup> No sooner had the Egba settled in Abeokuta than they invaded their Ijebu and Egbado neighbours. In the process, the Egba destroyed many Ijebu-Remo and Egbado towns. The towns destroyed in Ijebu-Remo country included Ofin, Makun, Epe, Oke-Agbo, Iwoye and Ojowo.<sup>4</sup> Ilaro, Erinja, Ilobi and Eyo were among several towns and villages destroyed in Egbadoland.<sup>5</sup> Refugees from these and other affected Ijebu and Egbado towns and villages fled to places where they felt their safety could be guaranteed. For instance, in Ijebu-Remo, refugees fled to Ikorodu, an already existing town relatively unaffected by the Egba ravages. Some of them founded new towns such as Ijebu-Igbo and Sagamu. In Egbadoland, the refugees converged in a new location which grew to become a town known as Oke Odan.<sup>6</sup>

The Ijaye War was a culmination of the rivalry between Ijaye and Ibadan, founded in 1829 and 1831 respectively by Oyo refugee soldiers. The war ended in the defeat

and destruction of Ijaye. The Ijaye survivors fled to Abeokuta, Lagos and other parts of Yorubaland.<sup>7</sup> Ibadan, *ipso facto*, became the dominant power in Yorubaland until 1878 when the Ekitiparapo alliance was formed. The war that ensued attracted other Yoruba groups such as the Ijebu, Egba, Ife and even the Fulani - led forces of Ilorin all of which teamed up with the Ekitiparapo against Ibadan. Within the 16 years of its duration, the war caused considerable population dislocation particularly in the besieged towns and those towns and villages situated in and around the centres of military engagements. Some of the affected towns were Imesi-Ile, Igbaja, Iresi, Ada, Ikirun and Offa.

The Yoruba on the coast had their own experience of civil disturbances leading to wars and population dislocation. The most prominent of these was the chieftaincy dispute in the Awori Kingdom of Lagos. The dispute which began in the reign of Ologun Kutere in the first decade of the century erupted into civil wars in the 1830s and 1840s. The first was in 1836 when Adele, one of the contestants to the throne, was driven with some of his supporters to Badagry. The second involved princes Akintoye and Kosoko in 1845. The latter was victorious and he succeeded in ascending the throne as King of Lagos while Akintoye and his supporters fled to Badagry. In 1851 Akintoye secured the help of the British who bombarded Lagos and drove Kosoko away from the kingdom. Kosoko and about 1,500 supporters were forced to flee to Epe, a lagoon town in Ijebu-Ode Kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from the above mentioned internecine wars and civil disturbances, the Yoruba were attacked by their neighbours in the course of the century. From the East and North-east, the Edo Kingdom of Benin subjected the Ekiti to constant raids up to the early decades of the century.<sup>9</sup> Nupe soldiers raided Ekiti, Akoko and Iyagba towns up to c.1897.<sup>10</sup> From the West, the Kingdom of Dahomey menaced the Egba and the Oke Ogun (Upper Ogun) area between 1845 and 1892.<sup>11</sup> Many towns and villages were destroyed by the invaders while a large number of others were deserted by their inhabitants. For example, Akoko towns and villages ravaged by the invading Nupe forces included Epinmi, Upe, Igasi, Oyin, Eruku, Afin and Eriti,<sup>12</sup> while in Iyagbaland, Ayere, Ife, Takele, Ejuku, Isanwo, Ejiba Ogbe and many other towns and villages were devastated.<sup>13</sup> Displaced people sought refuge on hill tops or in towns located in impregnable hilly environments. Thus because of their location in hilly areas, towns like Oka, Isua, Shosan, Ipesi, Ogidi were flooded with refugees.<sup>14</sup> In Ekitiland many towns and villages were deserted by their inhabitants who fled either *en masse* or as groups of families to naturally defended towns or places where their safety could be assured. One of such places of refuge was Ikere-Ekiti which hosted refugees from other towns like Agbado, Iluomoba, Afao and Are.<sup>15</sup> In the Oke Ogun, people deserted towns situated in vulnerable plain areas to the hills. Relics of such places of refuge can be seen on the Otefon hill and the ruins of Ile-Bioku near the present town of Lantate.<sup>16</sup>

### **Refugees' Mode of Settlement<sup>17</sup>**

Refugees fled their homes in different ways: as individuals, corporate families or towns with their *Oba*, chiefs and ancestral gods and goddesses into host towns and villages. Their major requirements in their choice of hosts included safe geographi-

cal location, kinship ties, political and cultural affiliations as well as the capability of the hosts to afford them protection. Such towns as Osogbo, Ogbomoso, Iwo, Saki, Okeho, Iganna, Ile-Ife and Ikere-Ekiti which in one way or the other satisfied these requirements were inundated with refugees.

Refugees began to move into these and other host towns as early as or even before the first decade of the century. Fugitives fled to Osogbo from Eko Ende, Ilobu and several Oyo towns and villages. So great was the influx of the Oyo refugees that the indigenous population of the town was outstripped by the fugitives. Indeed by 1840, Osogbo which was originally an Ijesa town had by 1840 become an Oyo-Yoruba city.<sup>18</sup> Sections of the royal families of Ikoyi, Igbon, Iresa and Ido took refuge in Ogbomoso. Iwo hosted refugees from Owu, Oje (an Egba town near Owu), Kuta, Telemu and Offa.<sup>19</sup> Several families and even whole villages migrated into Okeho, Iganna and Saki. Refugees came to Okeho from more than ten towns and villages. Prominent among these were: Pamo, Ibode, Gbonje, Imoba, Isia, Isemi and Oyo-Ile (the Alapini family).<sup>20</sup> Saki experienced greater influx of refugees than Okeho because of its military strength and rugged environment. People fled from Sepeteri, Iya, Aha, Oyo-Ile, Bode, Illua, Oko Oro, Lanto, Okoto, Ayekale, Sangote, Gbologun, etc. to seek protection in Saki. Members of the aristocracy in the deserted Old Oyo capital including royal wives, palace officials and some members of the *Oyomesi* fled to the town and also to Igboho and Kisi which were equally protected by hills.<sup>21</sup> Ikere-Ekiti was considered safe as a place of refuge by some Ekiti towns because of its historic link between the *Ogoga* its ruler and the Kingdom of Benin. The *Ogoga* dynasty was said to have been founded by a Benin hunter.<sup>22</sup> Thus, at the period of Benin invasion of Ekitiland, Ikere maintained cordial relations with Benin and it was consequently spared by the Benin warriors.

Of all the towns which hosted refugees, Ile-Ife had a unique status. First, it was accepted by a number of Yoruba states as the cradle of the Yoruba and as a sacred town free from attack from any group of the Yoruba. Second, it was situated in a dense forest that could not be penetrated by the Fulani cavalry. Third, in the first three decades of the century Ile-Ife was a power to reckon with militarily. It could boast of famous warriors like the veteran Labosinde and Okunade, the *Maye* who played leading roles in the Owu War and the early stages of the development of Ibadan as a military town.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the Oyo-Yoruba refugees felt free to stream to Ile-Ife, which attracted them as a veritable place of sanctuary. Therefore as far back as the late 18th century, refugees from Ikoyi, Owu, Ogbagba, Ede, Ejigbo, Ola, Oko, Oje, Irawo and many other Oyo-Yoruba towns and villages trooped into Ile-Ife.

Refugees who fled to host towns as individuals or groups of families put themselves under the protection of powerful quarter or war chiefs in these towns. In some cases, community affiliation was considered by the refugees in their choice of patrons. For instance, Ofa refugees in Iwo put themselves under the Jagun, a chief who had earlier migrated from Ofa. In Ile-Ife, the refugees freely put themselves under the protection of quarter chiefs who vied with one another in inviting the "returnees" to settle in their quarters.

Those who fled as royal families, towns or sections of towns, settled separately in different parts of the host towns each group naming its settlement after its original



homestead. These settlements became quarters of the host towns. For example, Pamo quarter in Okeho was founded by refugees who fled from Pamo during the period of the battle fought there in the 1830s.<sup>24</sup> Ende in Osogbo, Illua in Saki, Igbon in Ogbomoso and Agbado in Ikere-Ekiti were all founded by refugees from Eko Ende, Illua, Igbon and Agbado-Ekiti respectively.

A category of the refugees consisted of a whole or a section of some groups of the Yoruba whose towns were devastated by their enemies. The Egba and the Egbado refugees belong to this category. They did not move into host towns. Rather, they concentrated in entirely new towns. For example, refugees from about 154 Egba towns founded Abeokuta.<sup>25</sup> Here the refugees settled separately according to their townships, each naming its new settlement after its original homestead. In the same way, refugees from Egbado towns, of Ilaro, Ilobi, Eyo and Erinja, founded the town of Oke-Odan.

Another category of refugees that did not move into host towns consisted of a motley of soldiers defending the Old Oyo Empire, the allied forces which destroyed *Owu* and devastated Egba towns and the followers of the expelled King Kosoko of Lagos. These occupied towns had already been deserted by their inhabitants. For instance, a cream of Oyo refugee soldiers under Dado and Kurumi drove away the Egba inhabitants of Ijaye and occupied the town in 1831.<sup>26</sup> The allied army of Ife, Oyo and Ijebu soldiers occupied the deserted Egba town of Ibadan in 1829<sup>27</sup> while in 1852 Kosoko's men occupied Epe whose inhabitants had fled to the fishing villages behind the Lagoon in 1850 to avoid the wrath of the *Awujale* of Ijebu-Ode.<sup>28</sup>

Though the refugees settled in different ways and in different locations, they faced, *inter alia*, similar problems of security, adjustment to new environment and integration.

## Security Problems

The refugees had to provide for their security in their various places of refuge. This is more so as some of them, for some time, lived amidst the fear of being pursued by their enemies, including brigands.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, some of those who founded new towns discovered that they had to protect themselves against hostile neighbours. Security problems were solved in two ways. First, refugees in host towns became proteges of their patrons or the *Oba* or *Baale* of those towns. In return for protection, they worked for the patrons and fought under them. In Saki, for example, the refugees swelled the army of *Bada Alausa*, a powerful cavalry commander, thereby contributing to the military might of Saki in the first and second halves of the century.<sup>30</sup> The Oyo refugees in Ife joined the contingents of their various patrons. They altogether augmented and strengthened the Ife army aiding the latter to invade and destroy Ondo. They were adequately protected until c.1833 when they fell out of favour with their hosts.

Second, the refugees protected themselves from their pursuers and their hostile neighbours. This was true of the Oyo refugees in Ibadan and Ijaye, the Egba in Abeokuta, the Egbado in Oke-Odan and Kosoko in Epe. At Ibadan and Ijaye, the Oyo refugee soldiers at first regarded their settlements as temporary camps or regrouping centres from where they would relaunch attacks on the Fulani who were

pushing southwards into the heart of Yorubaland. At the same time, they stood in readiness to prevent the Egba from recapturing their homes. Thus the refugees in Ibadan and Ijaye were always battle ready. The Ibadan in particular were able to stall the southward incursion of the Fulani at the battle of Osogbo in 1840. Thereafter, they launched offensive campaigns to boot out the Fulani from Yorubaland. In these campaigns, they forcefully brought Ijesa and Ekiti settlements under their political control. In order to prevent the Egba from regaining their territories, both the Ibadan and the Ijaye attacked them at Arakonga in 1834.<sup>31</sup>

The Egba were aware of their dangerous situation. They relied on their *Olorogun* society of warriors for their defence against their pursuers and for launching offensive wars on their hostile neighbours. The *Olorogun* society was formed in the 18th century by Lisabi who had used it to liberate the Egba from Oyo imperialism. After Lisabi's death, the society became moribund. It was revived and reorganised between 1829 and 1830. Under Sodeke, the society became the nucleus of a unified fighting force for the Egba at Abeokuta. Having thus developed a unified military command, the Egba were able to repulse the attacks of the Ijebu, the combined forces of Ibadan, Ijaye and the Ijebu in 1832 and 1834 respectively. They were also able to launch offensive attacks on their Ijebu and Egbado neighbours in the 1830s. Like the Egba, the Egbado refugees in Oke-Odan relied on the military for their defence and protection against their neighbours. The constituent towns of Oke-Odan - Ilaro, Eyo, Erinja, Ilobi - organised a unified army to ward off attacks from the Egba and their other neighbours. These other neighbours were Dahomey, Porto-Novo and Igbeji who resented an Egbado settlement in their vicinity. Indeed, Dahomey and Porto Novo regarded the founding of Oke-Odan by Egbado refugees on the land acquired by two Porto Novo off-shoots, namely, Basha, and Ishagbo, as a trespass. Consequently, these two kingdoms remained the inveterate enemy of Oke-Odan till the latter came under the British protectorate in 1888.<sup>32</sup>

The refugees in Epe had a very formidable enemy to contend with. The British which drove them away from Lagos had established a Consulate on the Island kingdom in 1851.<sup>33</sup> Akintoye, a pro-British Prince, had been restored to the throne of the kingdom. Both the British consul and Akintoye tried to pursue Kosoko and his fellow refugees to the Ijebu territory. They attempted to forcibly eject him from Epe so that he and his supporters could stop being threats to their political and economic interests in Lagos. Aware of their precarious situation, Kosoko and his followers armed themselves with muskets, war canoes with swivels and even cannons. Epe was well fortified to make it impregnable to external invaders. Apart from these security arrangements, Kosoko made friends with the indigenous Ijebu inhabitants of Epe who had fled to the fishing villages along the strip of land between the lagoon and the Atlantic ocean. He interceded with the *Awujale* of Ijebu-Ode on their behalf and paid the ransom demanded by that sovereign for their pardon. As a result of his intercession, the *Awujale* allowed the Ijebu-Epe to return to their former homes. The returnees became the proteges of Kosoko who had assumed political control of the town. Over awed by Kosoko's military might and trying to avoid incurring the *Awujale's* wrath again, the returnees did nothing to challenge Kosoko's assumed political authority. Kosoko took steps to bring the Ijebu back to their homes in Epe so

that they might not become allies of his British enemies.

To keep the enemies out from the lagoon and establish commercial links with the European merchants along the Atlantic coast, Kosoko and his men spread to the villages on the strip of land between the Atlantic and the lagoon. They established trading ports at Orimedu and Leke. Here they obtained supply of arms and ammunition and other European articles in exchange for slaves, palm oil and other African products. They effectively policed the lagoon. They attacked Egba traders bound for Lagos and diverted the Ijebu trade to their lagoon ports by preventing the Ijebu market towns of Ejirin, Itoikin and Ikorodu from sending articles to Lagos. Through piratical attacks on lagoon traders, they rendered commercial activities dangerous for Lagos merchants and their Egba middlemen. By August 1853, Kosoko and his men had become sufficiently militarily strong to attack Lagos itself. They would have taken Lagos but for the timely intervention of the British Naval officers who scared them away with the guns which they fired from their ships. In September and October 1853, they successfully repulsed two expeditions sent against Epe by the British from Lagos. So militarily inviolable had they become that the British had to make peace with them in September 1854.<sup>34</sup>

### **Adjustment to New Social and Physical Environments<sup>35</sup>**

The refugees were able to adjust to their new environments fairly rapidly for a number of reasons. First, they were accepted by their kith and kin with whom they settled in the host towns. Living among their fellow Yoruba, they did not find themselves in an entirely strange environment. Second, the social and political organisations as well as the occupations of the hosts were, to a large extent, identical with those of the refugees. As it will be seen later, the minor differences that existed were easily accommodated by both the refugees and their hosts. Third, their new physical environments did not pose any serious problem of adjustment. For instance, the Oyo refugees who had moved from the savanna area to the northern Yorubaland into the southern forests quickly adjusted to the change in their physical environment. Initially, those in the host towns such as Ile-Ife, Osogbo and other towns in the south provided labour in the farms of their hosts or patrons. In this way they underwent tutelage in the farming processes in the forest under the climatic conditions of the south. Thus when they were allotted their own plots of land, they had become acclimatised to the farming conditions in the forests.

That the change in physical environment did not pose occupational problem for the refugees was amply demonstrated by the Oyo-refugee soldiers in Ijaye and Ibadan. As soon as they encamped in their new locations, these soldiers quickly cleared the land for farming. Ibadan and Ijaye had fertile agricultural land which the soldiers exploited. The refugees were able to combine agriculture with soldiery. Indeed *Basorun* Oluyole and *Kurunmi*, two military leaders in Ibadan and Ijaye respectively, had large farms worked for them by their slaves. During their harvest periods, they usually glutted the markets with the products of their farms.<sup>36</sup>

Militarily, the refugees were able to adjust. As we have said earlier, those in the host towns enlisted in the services of their patrons or in the army of their hosts. Indeed, the Oyo soldiers who had moved south before and even after the fall of the



Old Oyo Empire did not lose their military aptitudes. The military performances of the Ibadan, Ijaye and also of the Oyo refugees in Modakeke, reinforced this statement. Despite their location in the Egba forest, Ibadan and Ijaye's army remained characteristically Oyo in nature and organisation. The Oyo army had been famous for its cavalry in the 17th and 18th centuries. However, the cavalry had declined in the 19th century for various reasons. Some of these have been identified by Robin Law as the closure of the northern horse markets sequel to the regaining of independence by Borgu and Nupe from the Old Oyo Empire; the revolt of the Hausa slaves who were the grooms of horses in Oyo towns in 1817 and the civil wars in the Old Oyo which disrupted trade routes.<sup>37</sup> As a result of the above reasons, the Oyo army became progressively an almost wholly infantry force from the early 19th century. The movement of the Oyo soldiers to the southern forest did not retard this transformation. Instead, it further aided it. The wet nature of the climate of the forest zone and the presence of tsetse flies there militated against the breeding of horses. Furthermore, cavalry forces were of little use in the thick forest where lianas and thick undergrowth impeded the movement of horses. Consequently, the army of Ibadan and Ijaye was largely infantry in composition. This nature of Ibadan and Ijaye army was in consonance with the progressive transformation of Oyo army from a cavalry to an infantry force, a process which had begun before the refugees moved southwards. Similarly, the division of the Oyo army into the vanguard, that is the front line, under the *Seriki*, the left division under the *Osi*, the right division commanded by the *Otun* and the rear consisting of the veterans, also featured in the military organisation of Ibadan and Ijaye. So strong were the armies of Ibadan and Ijaye in the 19th century that they became the defenders of Yorubaland against their enemies. While the Ibadan were able to checkmate the southward advance of the Ilorin, the Ijaye successfully kept the Dahomeans at bay until after the destruction of their town in 1862.

Like their Oyo counterparts, Kosoko and his fellow refugees were not discomfited by their new environment in Epe. Having been used to the lagoon life in Lagos, they did not find the site of Epe completely strange. They quickly settled down to pursue commercial activities. The lagoon provided an extensive waterway for commercial transactions with the Ijebu living in the villages to the south, southwest and southeast of Epe as well as providing contacts with the Ijebu ports and riverine market towns of Okitipupa in the Ondo kingdom. Kosoko and his followers seized the advantage provided by their physical environment to trade extensively on the lagoon. They dealt, at first, in slaves and later in palm oil - all aspects of trade with which they had been familiar before their expulsion from Lagos. Therefore they spread their influence over other lagoon towns and villages and penetrated into the Atlantic Sea Coast where they opened up trade with European merchants at Orimedu, Leke and Olomowere. They were so successful commercially that they became rivals to the traders in Lagos. Some of them moved to the fishing villages along the lagoon as fishermen while a few (like Osodi Tapa, the prime minister and confidant of Kosoko) had farms which were worked for them by their slaves.<sup>38</sup>

The Ijebu were not hostile to the Lagos refugees in their midst. For instance, Kosoko settled at Epe with the permission of *Oba Anikilaya*, the *Awujale* of Ijebu-



Ode who was his relation. The indigenous inhabitants of the town did nothing to expel him from their town and in 1852, the *Awujale* rebuffed an appeal to him by Captain Foote, a British naval officer, to expel Kosoko from Ijebu territory.<sup>39</sup> Thus favoured by their physical and social environments, Kosoko and his followers were able to settle and adjust themselves fairly rapidly to their new situation.

## Integration

Protected individual refugees lineages in host towns were easily absorbed into the lineages of their protectors. They built their houses in the wards occupied by their protectors' lineages. They were joined in marriage ties with members of their patrons or protectors' lineages. Their protectors provided them with land for building and farming. Their leaders were, in some cases, given chieftaincy titles to accord them opportunity for political articulation in the lineages or wards. In Iwo for instance, not only did the *Oluwo*, ruler of Iwo, give land to the refugees who put themselves under royal protection, he also allowed their leaders to marry into the royal family. Their lineages were given junior royal chieftaincy titles.<sup>40</sup> In this way, they were integrated into the royal family. In Ile-Ife, Oyo refugees were similarly treated. They were given land by the Ife ward chiefs in whose compounds they resided. Like in Iwo, they married into the families of their hosts and enjoyed royal favour until, after 1833 when the scale turned against them.

Corporate refugees such as towns, sections of towns or royal families were integrated into the mainstream of the social, economic and political lives in their respective host towns. Although they settled as corporate entities in these towns, they were given portions of land in different parts of the towns either by the ward or quarter chiefs in whose areas they settled, or by their host *Oba* or *Baale*. Like the other refugees, they inter-married with their hosts. They were allowed to practise their religion. Indeed, their gods and goddesses formed addition to the pantheons of their host towns. Even in Epe where the *Aworin* Yoruba settled with the Ijebu, there was no marriage restriction. Kosoko, the leader of the Awori refugees, married some of his daughters to some Ijebu families.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Ijebu women were married to the Lagosian refugees.

Politically, the various refugee towns were integrated by their hosts. Each refugee town became a quarter or ward of the host town. The most senior of the chiefs of the refugee town thus became a quarter chief in the host town. Each refugee quarter was administered by its own council. In the host towns where the refugees settled with their *Oba* or *Baale*, the refugee *Oba* or *Baale* were allowed to retain their titles by their host rulers. Thus in Ogbomoso, the *Olugbon* of Igbon, *Onpetu* of Ido and *Aresa* of Iresa retained their titles in their respective quarters. Similarly, the *Baale* of Isia, and the *Baale* of Illua retained their titles in Okeho and Saki respectively. In order to absorb the refugees in the mainstream of government, the administration of the host towns was modified. Instead of the hitherto existing pattern of administration by which the towns were governed by their own *Oba* or *Baale* and Councils of Chiefs, a composite political structure was evolved. In this new structure, the host towns were governed by councils whose memberships were enlarged to include *Oba*, *Baale* and the senior chiefs of the refugee towns. The *Oba* or *Baale* of the host towns still

retained the headships of the restructured administration.<sup>42</sup> In this way, the refugees in Okeho, Iganna, Saki, Ogbomoso, Ikere-Ekiti and other host towns were politically integrated and accommodated.

However, the process of integration had not been smooth in some towns because not all the refugee *Oba* or *Baale* readily consented to being relegated to mere ward or quarter chiefs. Some of the affected *Oba* or *Baale* were often led by their precarious situation to tolerate their position because they regarded their sojourn in host towns as temporary. They and their people often nursed nostalgic desires to return to their homes as soon as the situation returned to normal. Indeed, a few refugee settlers like Tode, Sepeteri, Oje in Saki and Agbado-Ekiti in Ikere etc. finally returned to their old homes leaving a fraction of their population behind.<sup>43</sup> But other refugee *Oba* openly resisted being relegated to a second rate status in their places of refuge. A prominent example was the case of the *Olugbon* of Igbon, the *Aresa* of Iresa and the *Onpetu* of Ido who had taken refuge in Ogbomoso, a town ruled by a *Baale*. Traditionally, the refugee *Oba* were senior in rank to the *Baale* of Ogbomoso. They were among the senior provincial rulers of the Old Oyo Empire. Since an *Oba* was traditionally superior to a *Baale* in Yorubaland, the new political structure by which the *Olugbon*, the *Aresa* and the *Onpetu* now became subordinate to the *Baale* of Ogbomoso produced tension in the town. These *Oba* refused to co-operate with the *Baale* of Ogbomoso. They asserted their traditional authority as *Oba* over their own people, a situation which tended to create towns within a town. In addition, the people of Ogbomoso accorded the *Oba* traditional respect to the chagrin of their own *Baale*. Apparently losing his authority and respect as a political head of his town to the refugee *Oba*, the *Baale* introduced *Ogboni* cult, an important arm of Egba traditional government, to Ogbomoso to strengthen his authority.<sup>44</sup>

The refugees who founded new towns experienced minor problems of integration initially. As mentioned earlier, the refugees in Ibadan consisted of Ife, Oyo, Ijebu and Egba soldiers who joined the allied forces; The Ijebu soldiers in Ibadan were very few because majority had returned home after the destruction of Owu. The Oyo soldiers whose homes had been devastated by the Fulani had no place to go. Consequently, they formed the majority of the soldiers who occupied Ibadan. Integration of the Ife, Oyo and Egba elements became difficult for two main reasons. First, the Egba did not have confidence in the Oyo and Ife soldiers who had destroyed their homes and seized their land. For instance, according to A.K. Ajisafe, a prominent Egba traditional historian, the allied soldiers were kidnapping their children and selling them into slavery. Okunade, the *Maye*, an Ife veteran soldier and the commander of the allied army, took them as bondsmen. As a result of this ill treatment, the Egba felt that their safety could not be guaranteed in Ibadan. Thus in 1830, they quit Ibadan for Abeokuta. Second, the Oyo elements who were in the majority resented the haughty and autocratic behaviour of the *Maye*. They plotted against him and forced him and his followers out of Ibadan in 1833. Okunade, with his Ife and Egba supporters, fought back but they were defeated by the Oyo with the aid of Kurunmi of Ijaye in 1833.<sup>45</sup> This defeat ended Ife hegemony in Ibadan. It left the town firmly in the control of Oyo refugees who settled down to evolve a republican system of government and society in which it was possible for an Oyo-Yoruba man

to rise from the lowest ranks to the headship of the town. In this society, daring soldiers and adventurers from Oyo-Yoruba towns were accommodated and given opportunity to attain political and military heights. For instance, *Balogun* Ibikunle who ruled Ibadan between 1851 and 1864 was from Ogbomoso, his successor, *Basorun* Ogunmola, 1865-1867 was a native of Fesu near Iwo while *Aare* Latosa, 1871-1885, was from Ilora.<sup>46</sup> Thus after the Oyo had emerged supreme in Ibadan, they evolved a socio-political system so accommodating that no valiant Oyo-Yoruba man suffered political alienation and was denied opportunity to lead because of his place of birth.

If the problem in Ibadan involved the integration of a motley of refugees from Ife, Oyo, Ijebu and Egba, the task in Ijaye was how to integrate refugees from two provinces of the defunct Old Oyo Empire. The town was occupied by two groups of Oyo soldiers. The first group consisted of Ikoyi warriors led by Kurunmi while the second comprised Akese warriors commanded by Lapami, alias Dado. It became difficult for these two groups of soldiers to integrate for two main reasons. The first was jealousy. The Ikoyi soldiers came from the *Ekun Osi*, the Western province of the Old Oyo Empire. Ikoyi, their town, was the leading provincial town of the empire while the Akese soldiers were from the *Epo* (bush) province traditionally regarded by the metropolitan Oyo as uncivilised. Thus the Ikoyi group naturally looked down on their Akese counterparts. While the two groups were encamped together at Ika Odan, the Ikoyi group through Kurunmi had cautioned Dado not to attack Ijaye, an Egba town whose farms they had foraged for food. Dado had defiantly led his men to attack and occupy the town. Having settled down in Ijaye, Dado assumed leadership in the town and invited Kurunmi and his men to join him. Though the Ikoyi warriors and Kurunmi accepted his invitation and settled with their Akese counterparts, their pride was wounded especially as the Akese warriors claimed the honour for the conquest of Ijaye. Dado their leader did not help the situation by his taunting reference to the Ikoyi soldiers as cowards. Consequently, the Ikoyi warriors continued to retrieve their prestige by planning a show down on their Akese counterparts. Second, there was a clash of interest in the town between Kurunmi's men who adjusted quite rapidly and settled down to agriculture the restless followers of Dado who were unwilling to give up debased existence. Dado has been described by Samuel Johnson as a man who was restless, "trigger-happy and never in his element unless he was at the head of his army directing a battle".<sup>47</sup> He often frightened his colleagues who mistook the volleys he ordered his men to fire as an invasion of their camp. Thus the mutual jealousy and clash of interest among the refugees in Ijaye militated against early integration. In 1832, Kurunmi decided to take the bull by the horn. With his immediate followers, he entered Dado's compound and blew all who attempted to defend him. Dado escaped and fled the town with a few of his followers. Kurunmi proclaimed himself as the ruler. The expulsion of Dado enabled Kurunmi and his Ikoyi warriors to take full control of Ijaye. They forced the remaining Akese warriors under Ayo to quit Ijaye for Abemo. In 1835 Kurunmi allied with Oluyole, the military ruler at Ibadan. The combined army of Ijaye and Ibadan attacked and destroyed Abemo. In 1842, Dado who had wandered through many Yoruba towns and had ultimately returned to Ijaye as a poor wretched old man was executed by Kurunmi. Thus the Akese elements were finally eliminated by their Ikoyi counterparts. But the



problem of integration was not solved until c.1844. In this year, Asu, one of the leading chiefs under Kurunmi resented the latter's autocratic tendencies. He caused civil disturbances in Ijaye in an apparent attempt to unseat Kurunmi as the ruler of the town. Kurunmi appealed to *Alaafin* Atiba, who had established a new capital at Ago-Oja (later renamed Oyo) after the desertion of Oyo-Ile in 1835, to call Asu to order. In response to Kurunmi's appeal, Atiba ordered Asu to leave Ijaye. The latter left Ijaye with about one thousand followers including prominent religious chiefs such as the *Alagbaa* priest of *Egungun*, the *Olurin*, priest of *Ifa* and the *Mogba*, priest of *Sango*. After Asu's expulsion, Kurunmi was able to consolidate his authority. He appointed his friends, relatives and sycophants as chiefs. For example, he appointed Popoola, his brother as the *Alagbaa*. The *Areagoro* was his personal friend. Kurunmi himself assumed the post of *Mogba* and the headship of other religious cults. Exercising control over the political and religious affairs of Ijaye, Kurunmi was able to integrate the people in the town under his autocratic rule until his death in 1861.<sup>48</sup>

The misfortune that had befallen them in their forest homes after the death of Lisabi and the need for survival in their new location compelled the various Egba townships to unite at Abeokuta. Lisabi had succeeded in forging unity among them in the 18th century but after his death, the Egba retired to their traditional rivalries to the extent that they were unable to present a united front against the allied forces that devastated their towns in the 1820s. Therefore having concentrated at Abeokuta, they realised that they had to be united under a man who could provide effective military and political leadership at this period of political chaos and insecurity. Sodeke who led them to Abeokuta assumed both military and political leadership.<sup>49</sup> Under him, the *Olorogun* was reorganised. Its members were put under titled officers and its command structure was patterned along the model of Oyo army. The *Olorogun* was responsible for the defence and security of the Egba. It also gained pre-eminence in politics as Sodeke, its leader, also became the political head of the Egba. To make it perform its duties effectively, the *Olorogun* was organised both at the local and central levels. Each township had its own *Olorogun* responsible for its local defence and administration. Over and above the township *Olorogun*, a central *Olorogun* with its officers chosen from all the different Egba townships in Abeokuta was constituted. Offices were distributed in the central *Olorogun* in accordance with the federal character of Egba political system. For instance, Sodeke from Iporo township of Egba Ake became the *Balogun* and head of the central or all - Egba *Olorogun*. Lumloye from Ilugun in Egba Oke Ona was made the *Otun Balogun* while the *Ogbo* of Egba Gbagura was appointed the *Osi Balogun*. Degesi from Ijeun was given the post of *Seriki*, leader of the vanguard. All other *Olorogun* titles were shared among the Egba groups and townships in Abeokuta.

The *Ogboni* which traditionally was the Egba civic council was also reorganised. Attempts were made by its members to appoint an all-Egba national officers like the *Olorogun*. For example, *Losi* of Egba Ake was appointed as the *Oluwo* (Head of the *Ogboni*), *Jeye* of Ijeun was given the title of the *Apena* while *Lufoko* of Igbore was made the *Lisa*. This attempt at organising an all-Egba *Ogboni* was not as successful as that of the *Olorogun* because most of the officers of the reorganised *Ogboni* were



drawn from Egba Ake. Thus the central Ogboni organisation did not reflect the federal character of the Egba government. Therefore it could not adequately integrate the Egba at Abeokuta and play leading political role as the reorganised *Olorogun* which by the composition of its officers, was capable of uniting the Egba for defensive and offensive purposes. Sodeke, the head of the *Olorogun*, led the Egba until his death in 1847. Indeed, the *Olorogun* played leading political and military roles in Abeokuta until 1854 when the first *Alake* (civil ruler of Ake and the leading *Oba* in Egbaland) was appointed in 1854.

However, like Ibadan and Ijaye, political integration in Abeokuta had its initial problems. The leaders of the townships congregating in Abeokuta initially struggled for the headship of the town. For instance, Sodeke had to struggle with Deliyi the *Balogun* (war captain) of Ijemo township before he was accepted as the paramount *Balogun* (that is, an all-Egba war captain) and ruler of Abeokuta. The people of Ijemo claimed paramountcy in the town. They contended that as the original owners of the land on which Abeokuta was founded, their leader should rule the town. Thus after the Owiwi War, Deliyi was prepared to contest leadership with Sodeke in a battle. Civil war would have ensued but for the wise counsel of Tejuoso, the chief *Ifa* priest who revealed the displeasure of the gods at such fratricidal contest. After the death of Sodeke, the political headship of the Egba was vacant for seven months as a result of the contest for the vacancy among *Olorogun* and *Ogboni* chiefs. Eventually Okekunu, the Sagbua an *Ogboni* chief who was inclined towards the restoration of civil administration emerged victorious. After his appointment as the political head, he proceeded to appoint Ayikundu, the *Jaguna* (war captain) of Igbein, an Egba Ake township as the *Balogun* to succeed Sodeke. By this appointment, he succeeded in separating the headship of the *Olorogun* from the political headship of Abeokuta. This demarcation between the civil head of the Egba and the head of the *Olorogun* facilitated a return to civil administration. In 1854 the Sagbua was formally installed the *Alake*, the most senior of the three sectional Egba rulers in the Egba forest. Okikilu the last *Alake* had been killed in a political crisis in the late 18th century. As a result of this incident, the Egba Ake had fled to Abeokuta in 1830 without a civil head. For reasons that cannot be explained, other sectional Egba did not move into Abeokuta with their traditional rulers. The appointment of a new *Alake* in 1854 therefore encouraged the other Egba groups to appoint their own civil rulers. The Owu appointed theirs in 1855, the Egba Agura and Egba Oke-Ona followed suit in 1870 and 1897 respectively. As a result of this development, Abeokuta became a town with a multitude of towns and *Obas* recognising the *Alake* as head. This political modification integrated the Egba under a civil rule. Other sectional *Obas* conceded the political headship of Abeokuta to the *Alake*; the *Ogboni* resumed its role as the civil council of the Egba while the *Olorogun's* role became essentially military.<sup>50</sup>

The process of integrating in Oke-Odan was not very cumbersome. Like in Abeokuta, the refugees settled in different parts of the new town naming their settlements after their original homesteads. However, each of these settlements - Ilaro, Ilobi, Erinja and Eyo - became a quarter of the new town. Each quarter had its own council comprising its own *Balogun*, *Otun Balogun*, *Osi Balogun*, *Bada* (cavalry

officer) and a number of elderly men, responsible for its own administration. However, in order to integrate all sections of the town, a central council comprising all the senior members of the quarter councils was instituted. This central council did not have a permanent president. Its presidency was rotated among the *Balogun* of the quarters. Two reasons were responsible for this political arrangement. First, the refugees' main pre-occupation was security. They relied on the military for their defence and political control. The *Olobi* of Ilobi, the only traditional ruler who took refuge in the town failed in his initial attempt to impose himself as ruler. He was forced to quit the town for Itolu'on the Upper Yewa river. Second, all the quarters regarded themselves as equals. So also were their *Balogun*. The rotatory presidency was therefore a political compromise. However in the time of war, the *Balogun* with exceptional military ability was allowed to take over and retain the presidency until the war was over. This presidential system lasted till 1880 when Erinja quarter persuaded others to agree to the installation of *Elerinja* as the first traditional ruler in *Oke-Odan*.<sup>51</sup>

In Epe, the Lagosian refugees did not experience any problem until after Kosoko, their leader had returned to Lagos in 1862. Between 1852 and 1862, Kosoko ruled Epe. The town was divided into two sections - Ijebu and the Lagosian. Each section was subdivided into wards each with its own ward chiefs. The ward chiefs took charge of the administration of their wards. Each section administered itself under its most senior chiefs. In order to integrate the two sections of the community, Kosoko established a central council comprising the most senior of the Lagosian and the Ijebu chiefs. The council which was presided over by Kosoko, met in his palace to discuss matters affecting the town.

However, shortly after Kosoko returned to Lagos, the indigenous Ijebu inhabitants of Epe no longer wanted to concede political leadership to the Lagosians. Reasons for this are not too far to seek. First, the Lagosian refugee chiefs who succeeded Kosoko reorganised the structure of the administration of the town so as to exclude the Ijebu from the decision making body. For instance in 1865 *Balogun* Agbaje, one of Kosoko's successors, formed a central council consisting of the senior Lagosian chiefs. Second, the refugees alienated the Ijebu by seizing their land and supporting the British expedition against Ijebu-Ode in 1892. By 1895 the Ijebu in Epe had appointed their own separate political head and had begun to agitate for his official recognition by the British administration which had taken over control of Ijebu-Ode territories after 1892.<sup>52</sup>

Of all the towns which hosted, or were founded by the refugees, Ile-Ife experienced the most serious problem of integration. Here relations between the refugees and their hosts remained cordial until after the Gbanamu War. The Ife regarded the expulsion of Okunade, the *Maye* from Ibadan by the Oyo refugees and his subsequent death in the Gbanamu War as political humiliation. They had revelled in the glory of the performances of their soldier in the Owu War and also in the political leadership of Okunade at Ibadan which they had, *ipso facto*, regarded as a satellite of Ife. Unable to bear the shock of the political revolution at Ibadan, the Ife became hostile to the refugees in their midst whom they regarded as the kith and kin of the Oyo refugees at Ibadan. However, the *Ooni* sought to protect the refugees who were

being kidnapped by their hosts and erstwhile protectors. By doing this, he incurred the wrath of their subjects. Pro-refugee *Ooni* were murdered. For example Winmolaje (or Wunmonije) (1835-1839) reigned for only four years. An abortive attempt was made on the life of Adegunle Abeweila his successor, who made concerted efforts to stop the kidnapping of the refugees. He was rescued from assassination by his Oyo refugee body-guards. In spite of the threat on his life, Abeweila remained undaunted in his protection of the refugees and settled them on a piece of land where between 1845 and 1847 they founded their own community called Modakeke.

Throughout the second half of the century, relations between Modakeke and Ife remained hostile. For instance, the Oyo in Modakeke attacked and drove the Ife away from their homes twice between 1849 and 1882.<sup>53</sup>

Thus while the process of integrating the refugees succeeded to a large extent in other host and refugee towns, it failed in Ile-Ife. This failure provides a background to the 20th century Ife/Modakeke political crisis.

## Summary and Conclusion

We have seen that the 19th century wars in Yorubaland brought about an upsurge of refugees who settled in different towns, villages and entirely new areas relatively untouched by the enemies. At a period when relief agencies were non-existent, the refugees were catered for in various ways by their patrons and the rulers of their host towns. These included provision of land both for farming and building purposes, protection against danger, and social, political and economic integration. Where they had no host towns to absorb them, the refugees made provisions for their own security and general well-being. In this way the refugees were able to adapt themselves to their new environments.

The refugees influenced their hosts. For instance, certain elements of Oyo culture such as *Egungun Alaso* (masquerade robed in clothing materials) as well as the use of long looms for weaving clothes and Oyo musical instruments like *Dundun* and *Gangan* talking drums were introduced to Ekiti and Ijesa towns by Oyo refugees in the century.<sup>54</sup> The Oyo refugees too were influenced by their new environments. For example, on getting to the southern Yoruba towns, particularly the Egbá forest, the Oyo adopted *Ogboni* cult which was hitherto non-existent among them. In Ibadan, Ogbomoso, Ijaye, and the New Oyo (Ago Oja) the *Ogboni* became part of the social system. Members of the *Ogboni* cult performed both social and religious roles. However, since the chiefs were made to swear oaths of allegiance to the ruler in the *Ogboni* house, the rulers in these Oyo towns used *Ogboni* to bolster up their political authority.<sup>55</sup>

The influx of refugees into most towns at this period had immediate and long term effects. Some of the immediate effects included the availability of a large body of jobless able-bodied men who were readily employed in the host towns as soldiers, farm labourers and share croppers. The employment of these people in the army, according to A.L. Mabogunje, stimulated economic activities, particularly the increased production of war implements and the production of food to feed the fighting forces. All these enhanced blacksmithing industry and agriculture. Others are the encouragement of domestic slavery and slave trading as unprotected refugees



were enslaved and used either as farm-hands or sold in exchange for arms and ammunition and other European goods. Apart from the heterogeneous nature of some Yoruba towns today, one of the long term effects of the influx of refugees included haphazard erection of buildings which present intricate problems for town planners. The haste with which the war and the ward chiefs as well as the *Oba* and the *Baale* in many towns allocated land to the refugees led to the confused erection of compounds in some of the towns which received sudden influx of refugees and even in the towns that sprung up in the century such as Ibadan and Abeokuta where people settled haphazardly. In the opinion of Professor Mabogunje, this confused erection of compounds make planning difficult for the present day local governments and area planning authorities particularly in some Ondo, Oyo and Ogun towns.<sup>56</sup> In addition, some of the inter-group or intra-community friendships or hostility which developed at this period between the hosts and the refugees and among the refugees themselves last till the present century.

Generally, the refugees contributed in no small measure to the evolution of new forms of government in Yorubaland at this period. Prominent among these are: military autocracy in Ijaye, republicanism in Ibadan and military federalism in Abeokuta and Oke-Odan. These new forms of governments were the end-products of constitutional alternatives evolved by these refugees to cope with their prevailing conditions.<sup>57</sup>

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## **Chapter Thirty Three**

# **New Owu Settlements in Yorubaland: A Study of the Social and Demographic Consequences**

**Akin Alao**

There is ample evidence to show that there has not been adequate academic discussion of the consequences of the Owu War which was the first major conflagration in the 19th Century Yorubaland. The fall of Owu in 1825 witnessed the total destruction of the capital city and this led to an exodus of its inhabitants into different parts of Yorubaland.<sup>1</sup> On the express order of *Ooni* Gbeggiaje (1823-1835) an interdict was placed on the rebuilding of the capital and this was the first time that such an order was issued by an *Ooni*. It would seem that the action of the *Olowu* which was a flagrant violation of the unwritten Yoruba constitution that no Yoruba crown head should attack an Ife territory prompted this punitive order. To buttress this fact, major Yoruba Kingdoms, such as Ijebu, Iwo and others supported the *Ooni*.<sup>2</sup>

The traditions of origin of Owu indicate that it passed through phases of growth similar in some respects to many southern Yoruba states. Owu was one of those Yoruba states that could claim ancestral links with Ife, cradle of Yoruba civilization and race though from available evidence, Owu was not founded by a direct son of Oduduwa as believed by earlier writers.<sup>3</sup> Again the founders of Owu were not, if we were to go by its story of origin, present at the popular Ita-Ijero meeting of those Yoruba states that dispersed into different directions of Yorubaland. This is not however to suggest that the Owu did not participate in the *Ebi* system as postulated by Akinjogbin.<sup>4</sup> Though it would be hard to agree totally with him that the concept could be traced to the Ita-Ijero conference of Yoruba princes. Perhaps it would be probable to argue that the *Ebi* concept which regulated relations among Yoruba kings had an evolutionary growth and that it took some time before it was accepted by all Yoruba kingdoms.

The dynastic founder was Anlugbua or Ajibosin who was the first ruler to receive a crown with beaded fringes from Oduduwa. It is believed that Anlugbua was the son of a marriage between Olawumi – Oduduwa's eldest daughter and an aboriginal Ife leader, presumably Obatala. According to oral tradition, Anlugbua obtained this



crown by persistent infantile wish demand and in addition, he was given an iron chain (*epe*) which subsequently became the totem of the *Olowu* and his people.<sup>5</sup> The tradition goes on to relate how Anlugbua migrated from Ife but was silent on the Ita-Ijero conference. The exit would be before the conference because Anlugbua migrated as a result of his growing influence which was a result of prowess and might. Anlugbua left Ife with some relatives, associates and representative of six principal Ife Chiefs namely, *Akogun*, *Orunto*, *Obamaja*, *Ejio*, *Obaloran* and *Odole*.<sup>6</sup> The migrants took a circuitous route and passed through present day Ilesa, stayed temporarily at Epe (near Ondo) and finally settled at a site between the Rivers Sasa and Osun. After suppressing a pre-dynastic group of people known as *Epo*, Anlugbua founded Ipole-Owu which subsequently became the nucleus and administrative capital of the kingdom.

A reconstruction of this tradition would suggest that Oduduwa succeeded in wresting political power from Obatala who was compensated with high religious office. It would seem that in order to appease Obatala and his group, he married the first daughter of Oduduwa. This marriage resulted in the birth of Anlugbua who was the eponymous father of the Owu people.

Oduduwa therefore, in order to check the growing political ambition of Anlugbua who was fast becoming a hero and a threat to Oduduwa's political pre-eminence and to retain political power in his own dynasty without alarming the Obatala group, encouraged Anlugbua to found a new kingdom outside of Ife. Representatives of Ife Chiefs mentioned in the tradition were perhaps sent along with Anlugbua to ensure that the latter did not stage a come back to Ife.

From its foundation, Owu witnessed considerable development of its political system. Anlugbua became the first *Olowu* and a monarchical political arrangement fashioned after the Ife example was adopted. The mode of succession to the throne as in most other Yoruba kingdoms was by primogeniture. The *Olowu* was the head of kingdom and he was assisted by two groups of Chiefs, the one non-princely and hereditary in each family (the *Iwarefa* including *Akogun*, *Obaloran*, *Obamaja*, *Orunto*, *Ejio* and *Odole*) and the other princely namely:

<i>Omoluberin</i>	<i>Omogbindin</i>	<i>Omolefon</i>
<i>Omoringbere</i>	<i>Omotunwase</i>	<i>Omokowajo</i>
<i>Omolaasin</i>	<i>Omotunwaji</i>	<i>Omogbede</i>
<i>Omosaaju</i>	<i>Omolaja</i>	<i>Omotoro</i>
<i>Omoniinu</i>	<i>Omojuade</i>	<i>Omomimi</i>
<i>Omogbade</i> <sup>7</sup>		

These princely titles originated from the need to compensate and involve other male members from the ruling families who might have failed to ascend the throne, or who were still on the queue waiting to contest the throne. In any case, where the *Olowu*'s presence was required, any of these princely chiefs could represent him there. This was perhaps responsible for the non-elaborate use of palace chiefs and officials in the Owu kingdom.

As it has been discussed elsewhere, the Owu War started as a result of complex political and economic problems in Yorubaland.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the war, the erstwhile

Owu Kingdom had been destroyed and the inhabitants had started moving into different directions in search of new homes. This paper will however concern itself with the examination of the social, political and to an extent economic activities of two important post-war Owu homes.

## Owu in Abeokuta

As stated earlier, the destruction of Owu Ipole forced the *Olowu* Amororo to Badeku where he easily and quickly established himself as a force to be reckoned with albeit for a very short time. He soon got involved in a large scale feud with the ruler of Ibadan after 1830 and this led to the destruction of Erunmu which gave the *Olowu* refuge, by the combined forces of Ibadan, Ijaye, Iwo, Ede, and Ikire. Ibadan was tough on the *Olowu* Amororo because he was fast becoming a threat to the proper establishment of the new political order being envisaged for Ibadan by Oluyole.

What remained of the Owu people after the sack of Erunmu and the tactical execution of Amororo in about 1832, moved through some Ibadan farms to join the Egba and others at Abeokuta. Lara, Olufakun and Matiiku were perhaps the three most important leaders of the Owu people that migrated to Abeokuta. Lara subsequently became the leader of the Owu quarter in Abeokuta while Olufakun and Matiiku became the *Asaju* and the *Balogun* respectively.<sup>9</sup>

This group had wanted to move on to Iseri on the invitation of an Iseri prince who was in exile at Ibadan. But on the consultation of Ifa divination and more importantly by the persistent invitation by the Egba, the Owu decided to settle at Abeokuta and they occupied the Southwestern part of the town in 1834.

At Abeokuta, the Owu represented the fourth wave of settlers after the Ake, Agura and Oke-Ona. The Owu developed a political arrangement slightly different from what was practised at Ipole, the old capital. Unlike in the old kingdom, only three ruling families were recognised, namely, Otilela, Ayoloye, and Amororo. The Iwarefa chiefs now included the *Akogun*, *Obamaja*, *Orunto*, *Osupori*, *Oyega* and the *Olosii*. The *omo* or princely titles were reduced to ten viz: *Omomimi*, *Omolaasin*, *Omokowajo*, *Omogbade*, *Omolaja*, *Omogbindin*, *Omotunwase*, *Omolefon*, *Omoringbere*, and *Omoluberin*. This category of chiefs became the accredited ambassadors of the Owu quarters and they advised the *Olowu* on matters affecting their quarters.<sup>10</sup>

The third important council came into being as a result of the growing importance of the military class in Yoruba history. This was an exclusive military class reserved for military leaders who had contributed to the safety, security and development of the Owu quarters in particular and Abeokuta in general. Such titles were usually won on personal merit in appreciation of selfless patriotism. These *oye pampa* (as they were called) became very important in the turbulent 19th century Yorubaland, when the military dictated the pace of socio-political development. The titles included, *Balogun*, *Otun*, *Osi*, *Seriki*, *Jagunna*, *Are-Ona-Kakanfo*, *Are-Ago*, *Are-Alaasa*, *Are-Onibon*, *Sarumi*, *Basorun*, *Jagun-Olowu* and *Jagunmolu*.

The Owu quarter consisted of four townships viz: Owu, Sokori, Erunmu and Apomu. The Owu had quite an easy assimilation into the political system of Abeokuta largely because their military prowess endeared them to the other settlers. At Abeokuta, the various quarters were allowed to participate in town administration through their

respective *Ogboni*, *Parakoyi* and *Olorogun* societies. The council of each quarter thus comprised the three societies. Members of the Owu *Ogboni* included the *Akogun*, *Obamaja*, *Orunto*, *Osupori*, *Oyega*, *Olosii* and *Omolaasin*.<sup>11</sup> The Owu adopted the Egba version of the *Ogboni* institution which was developed to the extent of being the most characteristic Egba socio-religious institution. The *Ogboni* was made up of wealthy and influential statesmen and a few women whose age and ability could allow them to keep secrets and be less emotional and sentimental about serious issues. The society was intended to be a powerful check on any *Olowu* who might attempt despotism and also on the citizens who might be lawless. The *Ogboni* house served as a meeting place of all chiefs and forum to discuss political affairs and adjudicate criminal and civil litigations. Meetings were held every *Itadogun* (17th day), but special meetings could be called in case of emergency.<sup>12</sup>

Another important society was the *Parakoyi* (Guild of Merchants). In the old kingdom, guild members concerned themselves with business and played less political roles. However, in the new arrangement at Abeokuta, largely as a result of the relegation of the monarchy, guild members became influential in deciding political matters. The society had three principal officers, *Olori Parakoyi*, *Akogun Parakoyi* and *Asipa Parakoyi*. The *Olorogun* were the war chiefs and had their meetings every 17 days except in cases of emergency to discuss the safety of the town. The *Akogun* was the head of the *Olorogun* society of Owu. Women associations also played important roles in the economic and political life of Abeokuta. The *Iyalode* was the head of the various associations of women traders. She was supported by the *Otun*, *Osi*, and *Ekerin*. At the federal level, Owu was to supply the *Ekerin Iyalode* of Abeokuta. However, an Owu woman, Madam Tinubu was the first *Iyalode* of all Egba. Reasons have been adduced for this seeming unconstitutionality. Some, particularly the non-Ake believed that her appointment was in appreciation of her great wealth, influence and patriotism, while the Ake argued that Madam Tinubu was not without Ake blood in her veins and that this was enough to give her a rightful claim to the position of the *Iyalode* Egba.

In the realm of religion, the Owu made some impact on the other quarters. The worship of *Anlugbua*, *Obatala*, and *Oro* were introduced, though *Anlugbua* remained exclusive to the Owu people. *Obatala* was adopted by all and the *Oro* was used in the public management of the affairs of state in order to exclude women from cases such as the arrest and execution of condemned criminals. *Oro* was also used in the offering of sacrifice in war time and whenever there was drought or pestilence.

Though Islam was known in the Egba forest before the establishment of Abeokuta, it is believed that the Owu introduced Islamic education to Abeokuta in 1834. A Fulani scholar is said to have accompanied the Owu in their migration and at Abeokuta he became a guest to one *Apati*, the *Seriki* of the Egba. This Fulani scholar had eight of *Apati*'s sons as his first set of pupils at *Itoku* and this encouraged many other influential people to send their children and wards to the Fulani scholar. This marked the establishment of Quranic schools in Abeokuta.

## Owu In Ijebu

Another major band of Owu people travelled southward along the River Sasa into



the Sasa forest of present day Ijebu province of Ogun State. This group first settled at a place called Erila and perhaps as a result of the adverse psychological effect the nearness to the old kingdom was having on them, they moved on to another place, Agodo, on the bank of the Omi River. The reason for this movement should however be probed further. It would seem that the hostility of the original inhabitants of Erila forced the Owu people to move.<sup>13</sup> Owu was never friendly with these communities during her glorious days, and this could be the reason for the unpreparedness of these communities to aid her, during her trying period. The Owu people soon moved from Agodo to Ori-Apata Imaleka or Igbo-male and to Ido-Owu near Isomu. It was at Ido-Owu that they had the longest stay, for they built permanent dwelling structures for themselves and their gods. They also engaged in farming. The leader of this group died and he was succeeded by Oluwoku who led the migration into their present home.<sup>14</sup>

It was during the reign of Oluwoku that the Owu learnt of the nearness and readiness of Ikija to accommodate them. The *Akija* is said to be the *Obatala* priest of the first *Olowu* in the Owu kingdom who was stationed at Ikire. The *Akija* however had an illicit affair with the *Olowu's* wife and he was subsequently banished from the kingdom. He made several attempts to normalise and restore relations with the *Olowu*, but all attempts failed. Even his descendants continued to explore peace moves and reconciliation with the Owu people. A good example was the support *Akija* gave Owu during the 1821-1825 war. Ikija was the only town that offered aid and assistance to Owu. Thus, after the war, Ikija was attacked by the allied forces and this forced them to settle on a virgin territory in Ijebu province.<sup>15</sup>

When the Owu were still lodged at Ido-Owu, Akinyelu of Orunwa and Ogumaga of Irowo encouraged the *Olowu* Oluwoku to punish the *Akija*. The *Akija* was not ready to continue the age long hostility and therefore gave his daughter's hand in marriage to the *Olowu*. The *Olowu* had no issue through the *Akija's* daughter, but he acquired much of Ikijaland. The Owu spent a total of 30 to 40 years in their sojourn in the forest before finally settling at a section of *Ikija* after defeating the *Ikija* people in 1854.<sup>16</sup> Thus the saying "O fi ida mimu pa ana e, o fi aimu pa elomiran". (He killed his in-law with the sharp edge of the sword, but others he slaughtered with the blunt sword).<sup>17</sup>

Owu-Ikija as the settlement was known after 1854, belonged to the *Olisa* of Ikija. The territory had Ijebu Ife as its southern boundary, Ijebu-Ode was on the west, Ijebu-Igbo to the north and Ife Kingdom on the east. The monarchical system of government was introduced with the *Olowu* as the head of the town. The *Olowu* commanded great respect from his people and subjects and he was regarded as the earthly representative of the gods, the *Alaye* (owner of the earth).

At Owu-Ijebu a novelty was introduced to the method of selecting the occupant of the throne. The mode of succession became matrilineal. The new *Olowu* would be the first son of the first daughter of the departed *Olowu*. This would suggest that the leader of this particular group did not want a continuation of the patrilineal system as it existed in the old kingdom. It would confirm the conclusion earlier made that, before the collapse of and exodus from the old kingdom, there were dissenting groups



within the kingdom.

At Owu-Ijebu, there were only two ruling houses namely; Ibese and Ebadela, to nominate candidates to throne of the *Olowu*.<sup>18</sup>

This could also suggest that only two of the six ruling families in the old kingdom were represented in this group that later settled at Owu-Ijebu. The two ruling families were to supply candidates to the throne one after the other.

In the execution of his duties, the *Olowu* was assisted by different groups and grades of officials viz: *Ilamuren*, *Odi*, *Osugbo*, *Pampa* and *Otunba*.<sup>19</sup> The *Ilamuren* Council consisted of those important chiefs who were the kingmakers and members of the *Olowu*'s inner-most council. Those were the *Akogun*, *Mise*, *Aaro*, *Odofin*, *Obamaja* and the *Ologbeen*.<sup>20</sup>

They were the ministers responsible for the civil administration of the town. The *Ilamuren* were to meet the *Olowu* daily and offer advice when needed. As judges, the *Ilamuren* could hear cases but they were not to execute judgement. The power to execute judgement lay in the hands of the *Osugbo* (*Ogboni*) society, members of which were to deliver judgement at the *Iledi* (grand lodge).

In Owu-Ijebu, perhaps as a result of the great powers of the monarchy, the *Ilamuren* were quite subordinate to the *Olowu* and thus were sometimes considered as glorified messengers-cum-advisers.<sup>21</sup>

Another important group was the *Osugbo* who were responsible for the execution of judgements. Members of this group wielded great powers and were probably established to serve as checks on the activities of the *Olowu* as they held the power to discipline any *Olowu*. They were not to respect persons thus their saying; *Ojo pa ewe koko, bo le ya ko ya* (justice is no respecter of persons).<sup>22</sup> Senior members of the *Osugbo* society included *Oluwo*, *Apena*, *Olisa*, and *Erelu*. The society, as a result of the oath of secrecy sworn to, was effective in the execution of criminals and vagabonds. As the representatives of the people, members of the *Osugbo* society were responsible for the deposition of any *Olowu* who had out-lived his usefulness and importance.<sup>23</sup> The *Osugbo* after consultation with the *Ilamuren* and the *Pampa* chiefs, would send a symbolic message of *ewe koko* (cocoyam leaf) to the *Olowu* who would understand by committing suicide. Thus the *Osugbo* comprised elders whose advanced years and wealth of experience could afford them the competence to deal with such delicate cases.

The *Pampa* chiefs represented another main group who were the town councillors. As a result of the wars of the 19th century in Yorubaland, there was the need for each town to develop her army to a level that could ward off external threat and maintain the safety of life and property within the town. Living amongst their erstwhile enemies (the Ijebu), the Owu developed their military machinery to the extent that the Ijebu had to accommodate them. In the struggle for survival, the Owu waged defensive wars against the *Awujale* of Ijebu-Ode, the *Ajalorun* of Ijebu-Ife and the *Orimolusi* of Ijebu-Igbo. Though Owu did not launch any offensive military attack, she however maintained her corporate existence to the envy of other Ijebu groups. Senior military titles included *Balogun*, *Are Seriki* and *Asipa*. These chiefs were responsible to the *Olowu* for they held their titles as a result of personal merit and the

good will of the *Olowu*.<sup>24</sup>

The *Olowu* was however cautious by checking the growth of this group. He did not allow them to constitute a threat to the monarchy as the overall administrative institution. Another distinct arm of the *Pampa* group was the hunters', farmers' and traders' guild. This group played economic and political roles in the administration of the town. The head of the group was the *Agbon*, in whose name, meetings were to be summoned and who was also the group's representative at the town's exclusive council. (This council comprised the *Olowu*, *Ilamuren*, Senior *Ogboni* chiefs and the *Agbon*). The *Pampa* were responsible for the organisation and execution of municipal works, as the clearing of paths leading to public utilities such as wells, streams, shrines, markets and other public places. They, as members of the guild of traders, had the exclusive right to determine and fix the prices of articles of trade within the town. They were also to organize trade with neighbouring towns and regulate the flow of articles. The *Pampa* sat in their chambers called *Igbare* and served as special advisers to the *Olowu*. *Agbon*, *Kakurin*, *Osukori* and *Asipa Pampa* were some senior titles of the group.

Finally, there was the *Otunba* group who were members of the ruling families who had found favours with the *Olowu*. They were to advise the *Olowu* in all matters and were responsible for the settlement of trivial misunderstandings. They were also the accredited representatives of the *Olowu* in matters outside the town.

With respect to religion, Owu Ijebu in the 19th century was more or less a transplant of the old kingdom. With the destruction of the kingdom, many of the socio-political and religious institutions were dispersed as people settled in their various new homes. *Obatala*, *Obalufon*, *Oro* and *Epa* were brought from Owu-Ipole. *Isemuja* which was an exclusive Owu-Ijebu religious festival, owned its origin to the 19th century. Tradition has it that, the goddess of *Isemuja* was particularly helpful to the Owu while they were wandering in the Sasa forest after the destruction of their old kingdom. *Isemuja* was considered as the *Olowu*'s mother's festival and it was seen and celebrated as a national festival with pomp and pageantry.

*Ebibi* or *Epe* festival was celebrated annually to ward off evil influences and epidemics from the town. However, as a result of their contact with the Ijebu, there was the development of some forms of cultural contact between the town groups. The Owu were introduced to certain religious festivals and observances, of which the *Osu*, was the most important. The *Osu* festival was a festival to commemorate the foundation of the *Awujale* dynasty and it was extended to all groups within the extended Ijebu kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

In the final analysis, the Owu in Ijebu had by the close of the 19th century settled down with well defined political, social and economic systems. They had succeeded in establishing themselves in different quarters at Omu, Gbawojo, Ido-Owu in Okun-Owa, Oke Agbo and Oke Sopen in Ijebu-Igbo.

## Conclusion

It is remarkable to observe that the Owu war which was the first in Yorubaland ended the life of a flourishing kingdom which had the potentials of becoming the successor to old Oyo Empire. The fall of the kingdom however led to the birth of a number of other settlements which played important roles in the social, economic and political development of Yorubaland especially in the turbulent 19th century.

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## **Chapter Thirty Four**

# **Warfare and Slavery in 19th Century Yorubaland**

**Funso Afolayan**

A few attempts have been made to explain the pervasive state of warfare in 19th century Yorubaland by reference to the trans-Atlantic slave trade.<sup>1</sup> As will be shown in this paper, the issue of slavery or of enslavement became such an important aspect of the wars that no study of the crises of Yorubaland in the 19th century would be complete without a treatment of the subject.

### **The Antecedents**

The institution of slavery in Yorubaland antedate both the 19th century and the advent of the trans-Atlantic Slave trade itself. Slaves were mentioned in the traditions relating to the establishment of many Yoruba towns such as Ife.<sup>2</sup> Slaves featured prominently in the palace organisation of several Yoruba rulers. Ile-Ife and Oyo had the most elaborate systems of palace slaves. In Oyo they were known as *Tetu, Ilari, Iwefa* and *Lemale*. In Ife, Ondo and Ila they were known as *Emese* while in Ijebu they were known as *Irewure, Eguren* and *Odi*.<sup>3</sup> In these places they performed important social, economic and political functions. They served as guards, advisers and agents of the rulers. Others served as domestic servants to individuals and sometimes as farming or trading agents.<sup>4</sup> The making of slaves took several forms. Eunuch slaves were made through emasculation. A man could also be sold into slavery for serious crimes such as treason, gross indebtedness, incest and adultery with the wife of a royal personage. Slaves also came from tributes and from captives of war.<sup>5</sup>

By the late 15th century, contacts had developed between Europeans and the people of the coastal region of the Yoruba country. Trade was initially in legitimate trade. By the 17th century, slaves had become an important article of trade.<sup>6</sup> Oyo, as a result of her superior military power, built upon a cavalry force, and on account of her proximity to the northern slave markets became 'the greatest slave-maker, the



greatest slave trader among the various Yoruba states before the 19th century.<sup>7</sup> The majority of those sold by Oyo into slavery before the 1820s were mainly from the captives taken by Oyo in its wars against non-Yoruba people of Dahomey, Borgu and Nupe.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1830s, the Old Oyo Empire which had been tottering for the past few decades finally collapsed.<sup>9</sup> Before this time, however, new states had risen in the Hausa and Nupe countries. This meant the closure of these areas to Yoruba enslavement. With the closure of the northern source of slave supply, the Yoruba states descended on themselves for the supply of the slaves to the coast. As the theatre of war spread to different parts of Yorubaland, nearly all Yoruba groups joined in the slave traffic. Every Yoruba man became a possible candidate for enslavement. The situation degenerated to the extent that some rulers started selling their own citizens into slavery. For instance, the *Alara* of Ara (Ekiti) was twice deposed in the 1850s for selling his people into slavery.<sup>10</sup> On the two occasions he was reinstated by the Ibadan who by then had replaced Oyo as the greatest slave makers in Yorubaland.

The Yoruba people who had been mainly beneficiaries of the slave trade became its victims. The society which prior to the 19th century had been generally shielded from the ravages of the slave traffic was now fully exposed to its devastation. Non-Yoruba groups responding to the internal stimuli of their own societies and exploiting the state of crises in Yorubaland, started making slave catching incursions into the Yoruba country. The Fon army of Dahomey, free from its humiliating tributary obligations to Oyo, descended on the Yoruba of Sabe and reduced both Porto-Novo and Badagry to tributary status. In 1851 Ketu was conquered and a substantial part of its population led into slavery.<sup>11</sup> Clapperton also reported that the Borgawa by 1830 were raiding parts of Oyo territory for slaves.<sup>12</sup> The Igbomina and the Okun-Yoruba suffered especially from repeated and devastating Nupe attacks. As late as 1894, Bishop Tugwell gave an account of the ruler of the Okun-Yoruba town of Ayere as follows:

...four years ago (c.1890), on coming to the throne, the Nupe came and took away three hundred of his people. He told us that oppression has been the rule here for forty years, that first the Nupe only demanded cowries, then farm produce, and that now they will have slaves as well. As all the slaves are gone as tribute, they have to give their own children and many after giving their children and wives for tribute have left the town and not come back ...<sup>13</sup>

## Slavery and the Wars: An explanation

Many historians have argued with some justification, that before the 1820s the slave trade in Yorubaland was inconsiderable.<sup>14</sup> However, after the 1820s there occurred a phenomenal increase both in the volume of slaves domesticated in Yorubaland and in the number of those sold to the European slave traders along the coast. This was due principally to the pervasive state of war in Yorubaland in the 19th century. The collapse of Oyo created a power vacuum in Yorubaland. The attempts by the nascent and imperial states of Ilorin, Ibadan, Ijaye and Abeokuta to fill this vacuum provoked several wars throughout the Yoruba country. War provided captives who be-

came candidates for enslavement. More wars meant more captives. In many of the Yoruba wars, hundreds, at times thousands, were taken captive. In 1860, during the Ijaye War and soon after the Egba army had been worsted by the Ibadan, about 1,000 Egba captives appeared in the Ibadan slave markets.<sup>15</sup> Following the defeat of the Dahomey army by the Egba in 1851, about 1,000 Dahomey soldiers were taken captives.<sup>16</sup> Another example was that of Ibadan in 1874. In that year, the Ibadan army invaded the Ekiti country. The *Balogun* of Ado put up a resistance. On 16 January 1874 the Ado were routed in a single battle. Thereafter and according to a contemporary account,

men, women, and children were captured without the slightest attempt at resistance. So many were the captives and so much the booty that the campaign appeared more like a promenade.<sup>17</sup>

Thus the official abolition of the slave trade by Britain and the attempt to enforce it in Africa by naval action did not terminate the slave trade in Yorubaland. The military and political struggle for supremacy among the Yoruba states in the post-1793 period ensured that rather than decrease slavery and the slave trade increased to great proportions.

The slave trade had also been held responsible for most of the wars fought in Yorubaland in the 19th century. This was not generally the case though it is true that some of the wars resulted from issues connected with the slave trade. A clear and direct example of the slave trade leading to war was the Owu War of the early 19th century. This was connected with the shift in the main centre of the Atlantic slave trade from Porto Novo eastward to Lagos in the 1790s. Apomu became an important slave market on this route. The closure of the northern source of slave supply meant that European demand had to be satisfied within Yorubaland itself. The Ijebu, apparently responding to the increasing demand for slaves from Lagos, incited local slave raiding in the western section of Ife Kingdom hitting especially hard on Apomu which became increasingly unsafe for Oyo and other traders. This breakdown of order alarmed leading Oyo rulers such as the *Onikoyi* of Ikoyi and the *Baale* of Ogbomoso who sent to the *Olowu* of Owu, Akinjobi, to suppress the local slave raiding. The *Olowu* responded by subduing many western Ife towns, including Apomu. This provoked a war with Ife in which Ife was defeated. The Ijebu, feeling their source of slave supply threatened by the *Olowu*, allied with Ife to lay a siege against Owu. The siege lasted for five years. In 1825, Owu was defeated and its numerous inhabitants sold into slavery. After the destruction of Owu, the Ife and Ijebu forces, joined by several Oyo refugees, invaded and devastated, one after the other, many of the Egba towns of Ikija, Igboire, Imo, Igbein, Ikereku, Itoku, Oba and Erunwon.<sup>18</sup> It was at the fall of Oba that Joseph Wright was captured. He later became a leading minister of the Wesleyan Church.<sup>19</sup> The Owu War, however, was an exception. Though most of the slaves were obtained through war, there is no evidence to conclude that the wars, particularly those among the Yoruba states in the 19th century were motivated principally by the desire to catch slaves.

## Slavery and Socio-Political Advancement: The Rise of the Ologun

Much of the slave hunting by the Yoruba among fellow Yoruba in the 19th century were not inspired mainly by the demand for slaves on the coast. This was due to new stimuli within the Yoruba societies created by the exigencies of this era. Slaves had come to possess for the ambitious and enterprising individual both economic and political values, as they (the slaves), had for centuries possessed for Yoruba kings. In the crises-ridden Yoruba society of the century it became possible for individuals who could command the necessary 'men and means' to rise to positions of eminence in the state.

Prominent among these new men who created the *Ologun* household was Kurunmi of Ijaye. *Ologun* means a warrior or a captain. According to a contemporary account, Kurunmi as 'a young man ... was a notorious free booter and slave hunter' through which 'he became rich and powerful.' By the 1850s his 'wealth and domestic surroundings' included a well fortified compound which 'covered about eleven acres of ground ... 300 wives and 1,000 slaves.'<sup>20</sup> The thousand slaves of Kurunmi were the slaves selected as his personal attendants and did not include those of his soldier slaves who were left to fend for themselves or the numerous others who worked or lived on his over 100 acre farms. By 1836 Kurunmi had become the undisputable ruler of Ijaye and the *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo* of the Oyo.<sup>21</sup>

Other *Ologun*, who did not dominate a town completely, exercised considerable political influence in their towns. Oluyole, a warrior from Oyo, arrived in Ibadan in 1829 with a large number of slaves in his train. Having first acquired the minor military title of *Aare Ago*, he quickly rose to become the *Osi* of Ibadan and by 1836, *Alaafin* Atiba had conferred on him the powerful title of *Basorun* (Prime Minister) of the New Oyo Empire. Oluyole's extensive household made up of thousands of slaves was the basis of his ambition and power.<sup>22</sup> Another was *Aare* Latosisa who in 1871 used his power and influence to seize the title of *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo* or Commander in Chief of Oyo army from the incumbent, Ojo Aburumaku of Ogbomosho.<sup>23</sup> Ibadan, more than any other Yoruba state, attracted many warriors who raised their *Ologun* households and competed favourably for power and influence in Ibadan and Yoruba politics. In 1855, Rev. David Hinderer appropriately described Ibadan as 'a republic of warrior.'<sup>24</sup> In Abeokuta, the *Ologun* became the most vital element in Egba politics. Biobaku attributed the failure up to 1898 to evolve a stable civil government in Abeokuta to 'the disrupting influence of the *Ologun*.'<sup>25</sup>

Two women worth mentioning as belonging to this group are Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan and Madam Tinubu of Badagry and Abeokuta. Efunsetan was an Egba by birth who made Ibadan her home where she became the *Iyalode* (Chief or leader of the women). She owned 2,000 slaves in her farms exclusive of those at home. She also had her own captains of war and war-boys. As the *Iyalode* of Ibadan she was very powerful and wielded considerable influence. Latosisa, the *Aare* and ruler of Ibadan, felt threatened and conspired with other *Ologun* to cause first, her deposition, and later, her murder by two of her slaves.<sup>26</sup> Madam Tinubu was a slave trader at Badagry who by 1846 possessed 'some hundreds of armed slaves.' Her attempts in 1855 and 1856 to expel the Europeans from the coastal trade led to her exile to



Abeokuta where as *Iyalode* Egba (1864) she exercised great influence in the politics and economy of Egba till her death in 1887. She was said to have accompanied the Egba army to the war front on many occasions.<sup>27</sup>

Thus the command of 'men and means' became the criterion for political advancement. Hence, when in 1873 in Ibadan, *Seriki* Lawoyin was deposed, the title was given to a younger warrior *Iyapo* who as the *Mogaji* of the late *Balogun* Ibikunle, commanded all his father's resources, and for men and means was unapproached by any of the other chiefs in the town.<sup>28</sup> Since possession of slaves had become so important, war was seen as an opportunity or a means to acquire the wherewithal for advancement. It was this factor that encouraged *Balogun* Ajayi Ogboriefon to exceed his military order in 1873.<sup>29</sup> He was sent to Ilesa to check Ogedengbe. His order did not include seizure of men. But after achieving his main objective Ajayi and his men could not resist the temptation of increasing their possession of slaves. They took to general seizure of the defenceless citizens who were taken as captives to Ibadan. The war chiefs in Ibadan clamoured for Ajayi's deposition and punishment. *Aare* Latosisa, however, spared him the punishment because he knew that Ajayi's "misfortune lay in not having the wherewithal to command respect and that for that reason he was bent at all hazards on risking everything in order to secure the necessary means."<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, several of the military encounters often described as wars in 19th century Yorubaland should have been better described as armed robbery, brigandage and piracy.<sup>31</sup> Many exploits of individual Ibadan *Ologun* (like Ayorinde) and their restless war-boys, the activities of the Fulani *Jamaa* in the Yoruba countries and the marauding activities of warriors such as Ogedengbe and his *Ipaiye* at Ilesa would fall into this group. The northeastern Yoruba people suffered more acutely from this type of military assaults which they collectively described in their traditions as *Agannigan* wars.<sup>32</sup> The term *Agannigan* indicates not a full scale war but one resembling a kidnapping, man stealing or slave catching expeditions, carried out not to establish imperial control but to capture as many captives as possible. The pervasive state of insecurity, fear and apprehension in 19th century Yorubaland was due more to this form of military encounters rather than to the fear or even the consequences of large scale wars such as the *Ijaye* or *Kiriji* Wars. Describing this system of slave raiding, a 19th century observer wrote that "all the Efon, Ijesa, and Akoko territories had now become a field for slave hunting for any number of men who could bind themselves together for an expedition."<sup>33</sup>

The above position is clearly illustrated in the career of Afonja, who was the son of a homeborn slave of the royal household and a daughter of the *Alaafin*. Through his martial ardour he got the title of *Aare-Ona-Kakanfo* of Oyo Empire. Having failed in his bid for the throne, he rebelled against the *Alaafin*. About 1817, he enticed the Hausa and other slaves of northern origin hitherto employed as barbers, ropemakers, cowherds in Oyo to rebel. Responding to his promise of freedom and protection, these slaves fled in their thousands to Afonja at Ilorin, where he constituted them into a formidable army known as the *Jamaa* (congregation of the faithful). First, Lasipa, and then Bugare, was his head slave. These soldier-slaves carried their plunder and pillage into the towns near Oyo.<sup>34</sup> They became a terror to the



people and a law unto themselves that even for years after Afonja's death, a crushing fear of the *Jamaa* remained in many northern Yoruba towns. In one of such towns, Clapperton found in 1826 that "the inhabitants had mostly deserted from the town on account of the rebellious Hausas, who make frequent inroads into this part of the country and have burnt several towns and villages."<sup>35</sup> When he finally arrived at Oyo, the *Alaafin* told him that the rebel slaves "had joined the fellatahs (or Fulani) to put to death the old, and sell the young."<sup>36</sup> Besides, to develop Ilorin, Afonja had compelled the inhabitants of many of the villages around Ilorin to abandon their settlements and settle permanently in Ilorin town. A similar development took place at New Oyo.<sup>37</sup>

As a result of the pervasive state of insecurity, life for ordinary men and women became unsafe and precarious. In consequence, a system of clientage developed whereby powerful men protected the interests of the ordinary people who were their clients. Able-bodied men, in search of protection, advancement or adventure associated themselves with powerful men, sometimes entering into a state of voluntary servitude. Ibadan, Ijaye and Abeokuta became the greatest recipient of such men. It is instructive to note that several of the men who led the Ekitiparapo army in 1879 were people who either as slaves or as freemen had experienced military training in Ibadan. Such men included Ogedemgbe of Ilesa and Prince Fabunmi of Imesi-Igbodo.<sup>38</sup>

The strength of a state depended on the number and strength of its *Ologun* war chiefs, while the strength of an *Ologun* depended on the number of the soldier-slaves he commanded. In times of general war, the different *Ologun* armies often coalesced to form the national army. In the war front however, each *Ologun* was usually surrounded by his soldier-slaves whom he normally led in battle, while he remained subordinate to the supreme commander.<sup>39</sup> The soldier-slaves were well treated and adequately rewarded. Some of them also had their own retinue of slaves: Abogunrin, Kurunmi's head slave had his own followers which included about 300 slaves owned by himself. Following the death of Kurunmi, Abogunrin took over the government of Ijaye.<sup>40</sup> Thus in the same way that the Yoruba kings had in the past relied on their palace slaves for the exercise of political and economic authority, so also the new class of *Ologun* felt the need to rely closely on their soldier-slaves.

## Slavery, Trade, Agriculture and Diplomacy

Slaves also serviced the war efforts in many other ways. Slaves were used as articles in exchange for horses from the Hausa or Nupe traders. Samuel Ajayi Crowther was on one occasion in 1821 bartered for a horse. On another he was sold for 'cowries' and later 'for tobacco, rum and other articles.'<sup>41</sup> Firearms also came into use in the 18th century. Slaves became a major article for the purchase of ammunitions. The Ijebu, utilizing their role as middle men in the slave trade traffic, coupled with their proximity to the coast, succeeded in acquiring sufficient firearms to be able to inflict a crushing defeat on the Owu in 1825.<sup>42</sup> Ibadan and Ijaye's use of the new weapons and the attempts of the Ijebu to prevent or control their access to the coastal arm supply added another dimension to the socio-political conflict in Yorubaland in the 19th century. In the Kiriji War, firearms featured prominently. Most of these were purchased in exchange for slaves and also for palm products. These slaves were

either *Kiriji* War captives or those forcibly requisitioned from the War Chiefs' reservoir of slaves at home and in the war front.<sup>43</sup> Slaves with special training in animal husbandry also provided fodder for horses both at home and in the war front.<sup>44</sup> Slaves also continued to serve as gate keepers or *Onibode* and as toll collectors. They served as potters, escorts to travellers and as armed guards to traders.<sup>45</sup> Slaves with special skills were imported to practise their arts. The rulers of Ilorin imported slaves who were experts at bead making from Oyo and Dahomey countries.<sup>46</sup> The Nupe ruler Etsu Masaba (1859-1873) also brought in weavers from the Okun-Yoruba town of Isanlu as slaves to Bida where they were resettled as *Konusi*, king's slaves. They were made to re-establish their weaving industries and they gave life and varieties to the indigenous weaving industries in the town.<sup>47</sup>

The 19th century crises also made slaves to feature prominently in the area of agriculture. As a result of the 19th century upheavals, most able bodied citizens were occupied with warfare which by the middle of the century had become the most noble and the most engaging pre-occupation. Soldiers were on occasions tied down for months or even years in the course of their campaigns. To feed the soldiers (who cannot always depend solely on their pillaging of and foraging on enemies' farms) the chiefs and the mass of the aged, the infirm, the women and the children left at home, farmed on a large scale. Normal forms of labour, apart from being insufficient, was apparently impossible. Thus to satisfy the agricultural needs of the state, slaves had to be obtained and used in large numbers. Further, the abolition of the slave trade and the introduction of legitimate commerce particularly in palm produce, created a new demand for slaves, both to work on the palm plantations and also to carry the finished products to the European factors on the coast in exchange for firearms and other merchandise. Nearly all the 19th century *Ologun* such as Kurunmi of Ijaye, Oluyole and Latosisa of Ibadan and *Balogun* Karara of Ilorin had extensive farms cultivated by hundreds of their slaves. Oluyole, for instance, established "extensive plantations which were cultivated ... by his slaves."<sup>48</sup> Anna Hinderer, a resident Christian Missionary at Ibadan reported that in 1855 following Ibadan's victorious campaigns in the Ekiti country that:

The Ibadan War has at last terminated, and the warriors have come home with great riches, alas! I say with hosts of slaves. Though not many are sold down to the coast except to Porto-Novo by way of Abeokuta, yet is the price high. Their farms are filled with them, and many of the rich warriors make new farms for them, and not a few of the free farmers have long been saving money to buy slaves for their farms.<sup>49</sup>

It was on such an economic foundation that the strength and survival of the 19th century Yoruba states were based. It was against this background that the wars were prosecuted.<sup>50</sup>

The 19th century was an era of revolutionary changes in Yorubaland. Loyalty, trustworthiness and martial ability became more decisive in appointment and promotion than ethnic or family connections. In this situation slaves started to feature prominently in the political arrangements of the state. Several of them became resident representatives of the imperial powers such as Ibadan, Ilorin and others - where

they served as *Ajele*, *Ajia* or *Ojoo* and others as the case may be. A 19th century description of the consequences of the activities of these slave agents and messengers is instructive:

The very name Ibadan stank in the nostrils of all the Ijesa and Ekiti tribes, so that they were only seeking for an opportunity from throwing off their yoke. And strange to say those messengers who were doing all the mischief were not the Ibadan born, but the Ijesa and Ekiti slaves who were sent with messages to their own native towns ... cruelty, vanity, debauchery were more common with them than otherwise.<sup>51</sup>

These agents played a leading role in preparing the north eastern Yoruba people for their revolt against Ibadan. In fact, it was the murder of one of them Oyepetun, by Prince Fabunmi of Imesi-Igbodo that provided the immediate pretext for the outbreak of the Kiriji War and the formation of Ekitiparapo.<sup>52</sup>

Slaves also featured prominently in diplomatic interactions. One of Kurunmi's slaves, Oje, was reported to have distinguished himself as a hunter, a commander and a diplomat.<sup>53</sup> In 1860, the *Alaafin* of Oyo was also reported to have sent 40 slaves, eight demijohns of beads with gowns and vests to Ibadan to inform the rulers that he had declared war against Ijaye.<sup>54</sup> Following the Jalumi War in 1879, the *Aare* Latosa of Ibadan sent large presents which included slaves to the *Awujale* of Ijebu and craved for friendly relations. The Ijebu however rebutted the rapprochement declaring themselves allies of Ekiti and Egba.<sup>55</sup> Thus slaves became a viable article for trade, presents' tribute and diplomatic interactions. Several hundreds changed hands in the course of the country.

## Concluding Remarks

This account of slavery and warfare in Yorubaland must not be taken to mean that there was a total breakdown of societal norms and traditions. In fact, various attempts were made to check the growing tendency toward complete degeneration of moral and avert a state of chaos and anarchy. New laws came into being to regulate the institution of slavery. It was made an offence to enslave ones own kinsman. The violation of this principle led to the destruction of Abemo by a combined force of Ibadan and Ijaye army in 1835.<sup>56</sup> In some places, such as Ibadan, slaves acquired considerable powers, becoming lords unto themselves and trying cases. Attempts were made to check the indiscriminate use of slaves in state affairs against freeborn. A law was made by *Baale* Orowusi of Ibadan to this end in 1870. Kidnapping and manstealing were made capital offences. Three notorious soldier-slaves of certain Ibadan's *Ologun*, caught for kidnapping, were in November 1876 arrested, tried and publicly executed "as a warning to other messengers."<sup>57</sup> Further, provisions were made for slave redemption either by one's self or by one's relative. A typical example was that of Olaseinde of Ora-Igbomina. He was taken with his mother as a slave to Ibadan. Having served and worked for some years he obtained the means to free first his mother and later himself from slavery. He returned to Ora in 1894 as a Christian convert of the Church Missionary Society. He was also responsible for the introduction of Christianity to his home town.<sup>58</sup>



Besides, some of the pre-19th century practices of slavery also continued. Enslavement continued to be used as punishment for committers of grave crimes. Johnson reported the case of one Omisina who in the 1860s betrayed his town, Ile Bioku, to the Egba's Ogundipe. Omisina was later hunted and killed, and his family was sold into slavery. The remnants of Bioku established a new town at Lanlate.<sup>59</sup> Even as late as 1895, *Alaafin* Adeyemi I was reported to have ordered the emasculation of a man found guilty of adultery with a wife of the *Aseyin* of Iseyin.<sup>60</sup> Further, the *Alaafin* again succeeded in re-establishing at New Oyo, an elaborate bureaucracy of palace slaves. And in the tussle for the *Alaafinship* that followed Adelu's death, the support of the palace slaves for the Aremo rendered him, for a time, unassailable to the Oyomesi who rejected his candidacy and asked for his suicide. The palace slaves' last minute desertion of the Aremo spelt his doom.<sup>61</sup> Besides, in the various power tussle for supremacy that characterised Ibadan politics in the 19th century, slaves featured prominently as a decisive force in the determination of political paramountcy.<sup>62</sup>

However, while looking at the consequences of the slave trade on Yoruba society, most of the devastation often ascribed to the slave trade should be better seen as the results of the general state of turmoil in Yorubaland in the 19th century. As early as 1826, Clapperton had told the King of Bussa that "Yorriba presented nothing but ruined towns and villages and all caused by the slave trade."<sup>63</sup> W.H. Clarke, who passed through Yorubaland in 1854-58 wrote concerning the destruction of an Egba kingdom that "it was during the ravages caused by this miserable traffic ... that this territory, fair, productive and beautiful, with a hundred and twenty villages, towns and cities with thriving, industrious and happy populations, was overrun, devastated, and enslaved." All over the Yoruba country Clarke bore eloquent witness to this "great tragedy" whose desolation is "so entire and extensive as to have few parallel in human experience." All these he said, "were the results of the slave trade."<sup>64</sup>

It is true that one cannot deny the fact that the need for captives made the wars to be more brutal more devastating and more destructive. In several cases, whole settlements were destroyed and the entire inhabitants taken into slavery. Nevertheless it must be stressed that the catching of slaves was not the primary objectives of the 19th century Yoruba wars. The primary objective was the establishment of economic and political supremacy and dominance. Enslavement featured prominently in the wars because there were usually captives of war that needed to be disposed of. More importantly, however, was the fact that the possession of slaves, in the 19th century, had become a viable and decisive instrument of economic and political advancement in the state.

Thus as a result of the warfare of the 19th century, the institution of slavery took new shapes and assumed new dimensions. In several cases, the pre-19th century system was modified. The wars and the needs of the state during the century ensured the large-scale diversion of slaves, hitherto meant for export through the Slave Coast, to internal use. The population of slaves in the society, particularly in the new towns of Ibadan, Ijaye and Abeokuta increased to tremendous proportion. In those towns, where career was left open to talent and advancement based more on solid personal achievements, the gap between slavery and freedom was thinned down. As new foci



of authority emerged all over the Yoruba countries, new forms of socio-political experimentation were also carried out. Slaves, if not sold outside the country, were integrated into the society. Some of the descendants of these slaves can still be found all over the Yoruba countries across which their forebears were carried.

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## Chapter Thirty Five

# Surviving the Peace: A Century of Scars of War on Igbajo (A Case Study)

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Whereas the Kings, Chiefs and *Baloguns* enumerated, parties to this treaty, and to the conditions and articles of agreement hereinafter set forth, profess to be earnestly desirous to put a stop to the devastating war which has for years been waged in their own and adjoining countries, and to secure the blessings of lasting peace to themselves and the peoples ... (Preamble to the Treaty).<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

The very violence and destruction of war, the agony, the bloodshed, the maiming and deadly processes of war naturally make war repulsive. Yet war, with the accompanying violence, remains a permanent feature of human history, irrespective of race, age and place.<sup>2</sup> The prominence of war in human affairs has led to the coinage of such expressions as "peace is an interval between wars" and "peace is the continuation of war by other means." It is therefore an evidence of Yoruba participation in human fate that war established itself in our land and virtually became the most predominant feature of our fathers' lives in the 19th century. It was no mark of unequalled savagery as some white people would suggest.<sup>3</sup> Indeed there was nothing unusual about wars being fought. And peace was not strange either. The treaty, coming as it did, only confirmed the alternation that characterises the following pattern of human history: war followed by peace, peace followed by war, and war followed by ...

Strictly speaking, there is nothing to celebrate in war and peace. Or otherwise war, like peace, deserves to be celebrated. A celebration of war, from a moral point of view, appears rather unconvincing. Celebrating peace on the other hand appears normal, and so we are, here, in 1986. Logically we ought to have been here earlier, on many occasions, to celebrate the centenary of the outbreak of the Kiriji War say 1978 depending on our view of history.<sup>4</sup>

Logic, however is not one of the strongest points of human history and so it is

futile to expect it to rule here. But by granting that illogicality we are compelled to grant also that what is peace to one party may be war to another; just as the gain of one may be loss to another.

Our intention in this paper is to show that while we are celebrating today 100 years of a treaty of peace, the reality of existence in that same duration may mean a continuous and virtually solo war of survival for another people. Igbajo is taken as an illustrative case study. Therefore we intend to demonstrate that as an effect of war, the peace that concluded general hostility may be the beginning of the real trouble for a particular people, a party to the war. The emphasis is on a better understanding of war and its effects so as to enable man see the necessity for peace.

### **Igbajo - A War location**

Igbajo lies on 7.75° north latitude and 4.8° east longitude. The town is situated on the highest hills to the north-western end of Ijesaland and to the south of the western end of Ekitiland. Today it belongs to Ifelodun Local Government Area in Osun Division of Oyo State. Of its neighbours, we have to the north Iresi, Otan Aiyegbaju and Ila-Orangun; to the east are Imesi-Ile, and Okemesi; to the south are Ibokun and Otan-Ile; to the west are Ada, Iragbiji, Ikirun and Iree. Climbing on one of the hills, one can see three to four of these neighbouring towns and villages.

The first point of interest is the link between Igbajo and certain towns and villages now located in Osun division and certain others located in Ijesa division. The same landscape features which obtain in Igbajo, Otan Aiyegbaju and Iresi continue to Imesi-Ile, Okemesi, and Efon-Alaye. The ridges and hills in these places constitute a continuum which suggests a natural link among them.

Beyond the cartographical concern for the purposes of locating, Igbajo hosted the war, the way some of us today host meetings of our different clubs, the way Ikirun hosted the Jalumi War. In short, Kiriji Wars were fought mainly on Igbajo land. Igbajo was the camp of Ibadan, the way Imesi-Ile was the camp of the Ijesa and the Ekitiparapo group.

Meanwhile, one feature strikes a tourist going through Ilesa and Imesi-Ile to Igbajo. Listening to the people in these different places talk, the closeness of the dialects of Yoruba spoken is immediately observed. One suspects immediately that the inhabitants of these different places are related. This is in addition to the physical geographical linkage already mentioned. The question that arises therefore is how come these people found themselves in different camps during the war? In effect, one asks again, what was the relationship between Igbajo and the other parties to the war? The answer to this question not only indicates the roles of the different parties but also, and in particular the place of Igbajo in the peace.

From history, a link has been established between Igbajo and the Ijesa. A good number of the population of Igbajo appear to belong to Ijesa stock of Yoruba people. The linguistic evidence which persists till today offers very strong support here. Also significant is the title "Owa" which is the same as that of the ruler of Ilesa. The title has been described as peculiarly Ijesa. Akintoye writes:

The best known of the early Owas were the great warrior rulers Obokun, Owari, Oge, Owahuse Atakunmosa, ... By the time the 19th century opened, Ilesa has grown into a great city with seven gates which according to tradition recorded in 1886 lead to some 900 Ijesa towns and villages all of which were subordinate to Ilesa. Of the old Ijesa Kingdoms only Igbajo which was tucked away on the more distant, more rugged and thickly forested hills of northern Ijesa managed to retain its independence... among the Ijesa, tradition preserves the names of seven crowned rulers - the *Owa* of Ilesa, the *Owa* of Igbajo the *Owaoye* of Imesi-Ile, the *Alare* of Ilare the *Olori* of Ifewara, the *Olotan* of Otan-Ile and the *Elejesa* of Esa-Oke.<sup>5</sup>

It is striking that Johnson retains only two names - those of Ilesa and Igbajo.<sup>6</sup> He was most probably dealing with the essentials, and the occurrence of Igbajo here, quite apart from other things, indicates the umbilical tie between the twin places Ilesa and Igbajo. Igbajo tradition<sup>7</sup> actually has it that *Owa Ajaka* of Ilesa and *Owa Aringbajo* were born of the same mother, the third of them being *Oniregun* of Iregun. With this umbilical link, the natural geographical tie becomes strengthened.

But the more important point for our discussion of Kiriji War is the strategic location of Igbajo. Because of the physical geographical link which we have just discussed and the bond of brotherhood between Igbajo and Ilesa, it was normal to expect Igbajo to be in the same camp with Ilesa. Again, with various inhabitants of Igbajo coming from various Ekiti groups, it was appropriate to expect Igbajo to belong in the same alliance with Ijesa or the same confederacy with Ekiti. If Igbajo refused to do this it would then become a dangerous neighbour, if not an outright traitor. If it joined Ibadan, the Ijesa and Ekiti would be exposed to Ibadan attack. It was therefore, understandable if Ibadan too sought to be at Igbajo.

But the competition for Igbajo was not simply because of its sheer location. It was particularly because of its highly defensible positioning. It was indeed a natural fortress. Of the military advantages of Igbajo, Akintoye has this to say:

Igbajo, situated on the highest hills in the area, was easiest to hold and defend against a stronger enemy. Igbajo was at that time an important Ibadan fortified post. To occupy it would be an immense initial blow to the morale of the Ibadan army.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed the claim of Ilesa to Igbajo during the negotiation for peace, particularly the fears entertained by Ijesa military authorities over Igbajo going with Ibadan were based on the strategic significance of Igbajo. Among the Ijesa, the real fighters controlled state affairs and effective treaty-making powers were held by the *Seriki-Ogedemgbe*. The latter was more impressed by the strategic position of Igbajo. On this, C. Phillips wrote:

I gave him a full account of our interviews with the Governor of Lagos and read to him the Treaty in the presence of his comrades. He said he would not sign the Treaty on Account of the fourth article which transfers (? retains) Igbajo, Iresi, Ada and Otan to the Ibadan

wholesale. I was sorry to find that the Seriki was instigated to this obstinacy by the Ijesa emigrants from Lagos and Abeokuta who seemed to have gained much influence over him ... Their objections to the fourth article were principally two. First, that the cession of those towns to Ibadan was an infringement upon Ijesa territory; secondly, that the position of those places was too contiguous for the Ijesa and Ekiti people to be safe in future from Ibadan invasions or surprises.<sup>9</sup>

From all this therefore, it is clear that even the mere military advantages of Igbajo were sufficient to bring the village into prominence in the history of Kiriji War. This finally became an asset to Ibadan and a handicap to Ijesa-Ekiti alliance in the course of the war.

## The 1886 Treaty and the Political Location of Igbajo in Peace Times

Right from the Treaty, the impact of the peace on Igbajo has been remarkable. Igbajo was not reported to be party to the Treaty although Ibadan was. Why this was so, no full explanation is attempted here. But a partial reason was that the reigning *Owa* was in exile at Osogbo following the invasion and sack of Igbajo by Ekitiparapo. It was most probably assumed that Ibadan stood also for Igbajo.

As for the contents of the Treaty, clause 4 made a provision on Igbajo and three other villages:

The towns of Otan, Iresi, Ada, and Igbajo shall form part of the territories of Ibadan, and be subject to the *Baale*, *Balogun* and Chiefs of Ibadan. Such of the inhabitant of the towns aforesaid as desire to leave shall be permitted to do so at such time and in such manner as the Governor, his envoy, or messenger shall direct after conference with the governments of the parties principally concerned, and such people shall not be molested by the signatories, their peoples or allies.<sup>10</sup>

This framing of the clause was a compromise between the opposing positions of the Ijesa and Ibadan. On the one hand, Ijesa was claiming the four villages. This claim which we have already referred to was insisted upon by *Seriki* Ogedengbe, even after the *Owa* had set his hands to the seal of the Treaty. It took time to convince the military leadership to the contrary and in the interim there was stalemate. On the other hand, Ibadan's stand was a denial of Ijesa claim and an affirmation of Igbajo and other villages' right to independence. What one observes is that the Treaty, treading as it did a middle course, left to the individual citizens of Igbajo and other villages a discretion to choose their own abode but fixed a definite political destiny for the villages as corporate entities. This position was detailed out in paragraph 8 of the *Proclamation of Peace* meant to implement clause 4 of the Treaty.



Those of the inhabitants of the towns of Otan, Iresi, Ada and Igbajo, who shall desire to remove from those towns, shall be permitted to do so with all their movable property and without molestation at anytime before the end of the month of January, 1887.

Any inhabitant of any of the said towns who shall not have left such towns before the expiration of the said term shall be conclusively deemed to have elected to become a subject of the authorities of Ibadan.<sup>11</sup>

In practice, as no case of people joining the Ijesa side was reported, the effect of the above was that the alliance that existed between Ibadan and Igbajo during the war was transformed to a permanent political location of the town and all its inhabitants within Ibadan jurisdiction. Instead of belonging to Ijesa province as it should rightly be by virtue of the origin of the ruling group and some other inhabitants, or to Ekiti province because of the composition of a large proportion of its population, Igbajo became part of Ibadan province.

An immediate consequence was that the Igbajo's location as a boundary town became formally registered. Today it is the last town in Ifelodun Local Government Area, and the last in Osun Division sharing boundaries with Imesi-Ile in Obokun (Ijesa) Local Government Area of Oyo State, with Koro in Ijero (Ekiti) Local Government of Ondo State.

Therefore since the Treaty of 1886, Igbajo has been a town left in the extremity of the world. All development projects - roads, electricity, water, communication - executed by Obokun Local Government stop at Imesi-Ile. And from the other side one would have had access to similar projects being executed by Ifelodun Local Government but the sheer location of Igbajo has always been prohibitive. The execution of most projects stops at the end of the level landscape at Ada, or flows down to the Iresi valley. In the alternative, Igbajo is just abandoned to the right side while good roads, electricity, water, etc., connect Ikirun and Ila Orangun via Otan Aiyegbaju in the Ila Local Government Council.

The fact has always been that every organisation or government would need to take a deep breath, summon all financial resources, before attempting to make available to Igbajo the facilities at its disposal. There is just too much of climbing to be done. That way, Iresi had tarred road, electricity and water supply before Igbajo. Ada, Iragbiji, Ororuwo, Aagba also had all these facilities before Igbajo. In fact, for mere repairs, the location of Igbajo has made any attempt too costly and therefore discouraging. For example, Igbajo road constructed by communal labour between 1920 and 1930 was first tarred only around 1960. When it developed pot-holes it could not be repaired until the entire road reverted to its former dust but in worse conditions. Since then, Igbajo has been dwelling in hopes. Prayers are said daily that the new road project started in 1976 will one day be completed. More importantly, it is hoped that the award made of a new contract by the Military Governor of Oyo State, Col. Idowu Olurin, in September, 1986 will not fail as other attempts before it.

In saying all this, one is not suggesting that the governments had not tried in the past. The point being stressed is that the war location of Igbajo makes it difficult to

thrive in peace times.

It would, in fact, appear that Igbajo was at the peak of its enjoyment, exploiting to the maximum the benefits of a war location carefully chosen. Like the proverbial beautiful lady, many suitors sought her hands before the war - Ijesa, the Ekitiparapo confederacy and the Ibadan. During the war, it was heavily populated; it received publicity, it received visitors and was of high political significance.

The very moving account given in the Report of the Commissioners published in the Blue Book<sup>12</sup> on the departure of combatants and the firing of the camps at the cessation of hostilities can indeed be described as the beginning or the first of the depopulation and desolation of a once crowded and glorious place.

### **Igbajo in Peace Times**

Shortly after the Kiriji Peace Treaty of 1886, Christian Evangelists started to migrate to Igbajo. As revealed in the history of Nigeria, Christian Evangelists brought along with them religion and education in their missionary wakes. The same happened at Igbajo and the missionaries' presence was particularly felt in the areas of Christian religion and primary education.

Baptist Church started in 1902 through the efforts of Mr. James Awoyale a Christian convert by Rev. C. Smith. In 1911, Late Rev. John Adigun Lafinhan, (father of Rev. J.P. Lafinhan of Olivet Heights) became the second pastor of the Church. In 1912, he informally started a Baptist School and in 1918, the school was formally established, marking the beginning of primary education in the town. Other schools soon followed, e.g., Holy Trinity (Anglican) Primary School early in 1913. The Roman Catholic Church had its first tent built for worship in 1913. It later established the Catholic Primary School. The African Church came into being after some misunderstanding among Christians in the Baptist Church and some other Churches.

From this historical sketch, it is seen that Christianity and primary education started early at Igbajo and their growth was steady for sometime. Indeed, compared to its neighbours Igbajo distinguished itself not only in terms of variety and number of schools but also in terms of enrolment. But soon, as social amenities became unavailable, some of these primary schools had to be shut down. Of course it can be argued that on this score, Igbajo was probably participating in the general fate of villages having their schools being shut in the late 1960s as a result of drifts from rural to urban centres. But that is only half the story. Primary education in villages like Ada, Aagba, Ororuwo was growing steadily. Today the relative position of these villages is advantageous over that of Igbajo. This is possibly due to the urban growth in these other villages. Whereas, they have been expanding and fast forming a megapolis with Ikirun, Igbajo has consistently been receding. It is fast becoming desolate. All because the war village is not amenable to the facilities of peace.

As for secondary education, the Premier institution in Igbajo is named after the war - *Kiriji Memorial College*. The school was established in 1952. In recognition of its age and high standard performance, Higher School Certificate (H.S.C.) classes were introduced in 1970. The school for a long time - all on its own, serviced towns and villages around. Thanks in particular to the liberal views of the first Principal, Akande Dahunsi, students were even admitted as far afield as Lagos, Abeokuta and

Ijebu. This ensured that although it was established through the communal efforts of Igbajo people, the school was not parochial.

Happily with the example of Kiriji Memorial College, other secondary schools emerged in the neighbouring towns and villages. Most recently with the policy of Bola Ige's administration in Oyo State, the number of secondary schools had multiplied in Ifelodun Local Government Area. But this general growth of secondary education in that part of the world, viewed from the initial leadership position of Igbajo, emphasises once again, the malevolent consequences of the war location of Igbajo. Ikirun, which up to late 1950s had only one secondary school, can now boast of about half a dozen. Iragbiji whose first secondary school was established in 1959 now has up to three. Iresi and Ada, very late starters in these matters now have at least one each. In the circumstance, the case of Igbajo appears calamitous. To all intents and purposes, there is today no more than one secondary school at Igbajo. The H.S.C. classes at Kiriji were dropped in 1973. In 1978 the secondary modern school established in 1955 was phased out in favour of a second "Grammar School." Little was it known that the Grammar School would not last more than a few years as a separate entity. With effect from the beginning of 1985/86 school year, it was made the junior secondary arm of the one and only Kiriji Memorial College. There is no doubt that if Igbajo's location were different, if Igbajo was not thrown into the craggy hills on the dictates and demands of war, it should have established many more schools and probably would have become a University town. After all, its H.S.C. classes actually brought it close to it.

The pattern observed with respect to education occurs in other areas of life in Igbajo. That pattern is one of harnessing resources, taking pioneering steps, all resulting in an upsurge which unfortunately is followed by a downward slope and dilapidation. In some instances, in fact, there obtains at the end a total eclipse or complete abandonment of the project initially so enthusiastically pursued. The argument being stressed here is that, apart from other causes, the explanation for such failings lies mainly in the location of Igbajo.

This pattern occurs in many economic and social projects. On roads, for example, we have referred to Igbajo-Ada road constructed by communal labour called "Ikomode". Igbajo-Iresi road constructed in the 1940s is the second link between Igbajo and the outside world. It is motorable only seasonally and at times remains unusable for years. The same is true of Igbajo-Imesi-Ile road. As for Igbajo-Koro road, since its construction in the 1950s, it had only a few years of motoring. Now, it is abandoned.

In its further efforts to reach out to neighbouring villages and towns, Igbajo has been exploiting the usefulness of markets but again the pattern is the same. The traditional market contacts with Koro, Iresi, Ada, Imesi-Ile, were supplemented with mid-way markets. The most successful of such efforts was the Oja-Okò between Igbajo and Koro, where products of the farm and traditional industries like pottery were bought and sold. We remember that this particular market provided cheap food supply and fast exchange of wares to all the communities concerned. But these markets no longer exist today.



Private and institutional economic efforts have equally been frustrated. We remember again the sawmill industry along Igbajo-Koro road that was close to the Local Authority Primary School. Both the school and the saw-mill industry are now forgotten matters. On Igbajo-Ada road too, a similar saw-mill industry was established opposite the site of a cocoa nursery establishment. Today neither the nursery nor the industry is surviving.

The people of Igbajo also attempted many other laudable projects which have met similar fate. We recall a library whose collection was composed of books donated by individual Igbajo sons and daughters within and outside the country. That library is no more in existence today.

There is no need to continue the list of woes.

## Conclusion

It is possible that the picture we have just painted of Igbajo is not a strange one. Truly, Igbajo is not alone in developing itself through communal efforts. Nor is she alone in experiencing rural-urban drifts which might probably explain most of the failings to which we have drawn attention. All this may be true, but what we are suggesting is that beyond these common occurrences, there is a peculiar factor in the case of Igbajo that makes it distinct amongst its neighbours. And that factor, to us, is the war location.

Before and during the war, Igbajo had so many suitors. However, as soon as the war was over, everyone turned his back towards Igbajo, to return home. Igbajo people themselves found it more economically and socially beneficial to invest outside their war-site village. It is this factor that delays and sometimes prevents government patronage with respect to certain facilities. The citizens are then forced to come together in communal efforts. Some of the projects thus embarked upon by the people are sometimes taken over by government or abandoned in the course of time.

Many solutions can be offered to the problem. In comparable circumstances others have preferred to establish new settlements. Idanre example comes to mind readily. Some others have chosen the path of distant migration. This is almost happening to Igbajo people now. Many of them make other towns and villages their domicile. But to us there can still be better alternatives.

In the first place, it should be recognised that the greatest problem facing Igbajo is that of its position as a former battle-field. A battle-field is a place which if you find yourself, you want to get away from at the earliest opportunity. A battle-field is not a place you pass through to another place. There is no thoroughfare. Those having no business there, do not go there. So passers-by and new settlers are rare.

A first step may be to open the place up, make it a thoroughfare. This will be exploiting the advantages of Igbajo in war times during the period of peace. Roads passing through Igbajo can easily link three States in the Federation - Ondo, Oyo and Kwara. The possible routes are the following: Ijero-Ikoro-Igbajo-Ikirun-Offa-Ilorin/Imesi-Ile, Igbajo-Iresi-Ila-Orangun/Imesi-Ile-Igbajo-Ada-Ikirun-Osogbo/etc., etc.

The second approach derives from the first. To open up the old war zone for peace purposes, there should evolve a new Kiriji spirit. This new spirit should be one of co-



operation, friendliness and unity with neighbours. In this regard, Igbajo and Imesi-Ile stand to gain best by coming together. Their lands were the most trampled upon during the war. Ironically, they are the closest neighbours, they are the most intermingled - by birth and by marriage. Yet, for communication with the outside world, they look in opposite directions.

Finally, the spirit of this national conference on the Centenary of the 1986 Kiriji/Ekitiparapo Peace Treaty can be proposed as solution. A conference of this nature cannot be a gratuitous exercise in story reviews. It cannot be a pure waste of time. It will definitely enable us to understand the past better, so as to be better guided as to the future. History offers infinite perspectives on problems of existence for both individuals and communities. It will be the duties of all those concerned to seek/what-ever other solutions history may offer beyond those we have suggested.

Whatever practical solution is adopted will be a matter of political decisions at various levels - village, local government, state and federal. This cannot be pursued further here.

As a matter of academic however, the point of this paper is to draw attention to the ways in which wars may have insipid but profound consequences for a place and its people. A distinctive feature of the case examined here is that the issue is not purely one of effects or aftermath of blows on the battlefield during actual fighting. It is rather a question of the result of what is determined in anticipation of war. It is not merely a matter of the greater difficulty in winning the peace after winning the war. It is the problem of surviving the peace when you have chosen your circumstances as if wars would last till eternity.

Pursued from Igbajo - Odo-Momu to Igbajo-Mayin-Akure, when Igbajo people finally chose Igbajo-Iloro the third and present site, they thought they would be secure for ever. Of course, the site was largely impregnable; even then it was not totally unassailable. Most seriously however, war was not to be for ever. Peace came. The problem since then has been to adapt a war location to the needs and life of peace. Courageous, enterprising, pioneering as the people have been, the location has been frustrating all endeavours.

Can a people's proven resilience at war not be transformed to secure and maintain bounteous survival and happy co-existence with neighbours in peace times? That is the ultimate and fundamental question which the Igbajo case study raises.

## Notes and References

1. The Whole Treaty is contained in the invaluable work of Rev. Samuel Johnson (1921): *The History of the Yorubas Lagos: C.M.S.* The portion quoted is at page 528.
2. See Oladitan O. (1975): *The Theme of Violence in African Novel of French Expression*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan (pages 9-29).

3. This is part of myths and stereotypes of Europeans on Africa and Africans, see for example Curtin, Phillip D. (1965). *The Image of African British Ideas and Actions 1780-1850*. London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd.
4. The 1886 Treaty covers various wars or various fronts of the same war. Surely the idea that outbreaks of war should be celebrated will take a long time to receive acceptance, if it will ever do.
5. Akintoye, S.A. *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland 1840-1893*. London, 1971 pp.19-20.
6. Johnson, *Op.cit.*, p.23.
7. We have relied here on Kabiyesi Oba Isaac Adelani Famodun II, Owa of Igbajo, Tugbiyele, E.A: *An Introductory History of Igbajo*, (Osogbo: Ademola Printing Press, 1986) and our personal knowledge.
8. *Ibid.*, p.97
9. Johnson, S. *op. cit.*, p.534
10. *Ibid.*, p.529
11. *Ibid.*, p.549
12. *Ibid.*, p.545ff

## Chapter Thirty Six

# The Nupe Imperialism and the Ogidi Grand Alliance 1894–1897: Reflections of Ekitiparapo War

Z.O. Apata

### Introduction

Although the 1886 Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Commerce formally brought to a close the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War,<sup>1</sup> the independence movement which the Ekiti alliance represented, continued to be a source of inspiration to other belligerent groups in Yorubaland. An example of this were the Ogidi and their neighbours, namely, Ogale, Aduge, Ayere, Ekinrin-Adde, Ufe, Isua, Ogbagi, Ikaram and Daja. These groups are found in Ijumu, and Akoko areas of northeast Yorubaland. To the people of these areas, the term "Ekitiparapo" was quite significant. It was seen essentially as an anti-imperialist movement and also as an expression of self-determination and total commitment on the part of the oppressed people to free themselves from domination.<sup>2</sup> The tendency therefore was to emulate "Ekitiparapo" in their fight against the Nupe imperialists.

In the second half of the 19th century, the northeast Yorubaland was besieged and subjugated by the Nupe. The region includes the Yoruba-speaking areas of Yagba, Owe, Bunu, Oworo, Ijumu and Akoko.<sup>3</sup> With the exception of Oworo and Akoko, these groups now constitute the Oyi Local Government Area of Kwara State.<sup>4</sup> Ogidi is one of the notable settlements in Ijumu area.

The socio-political structure of the region was essentially decentralised. Each community was autonomous and self-governing. A group of families which claimed the same agnatic descent constituted the *Aku* (clan). Two or more *Aku* formed the *Adugbo* (quarter) with the oldest member of the most senior lineage usually being *Olori Adugbo*. Where a group of related lineages merged to form an enlarged community, the oldest man was selected as the *Olori* or *Olu*.<sup>5</sup> The *Olu* was not an autocrat: neither was he seen as a paramount ruler. Although the *Obaro* of Owe and the *Alayere* of Ayere in Ijumu group, have been portrayed as paramount rulers;<sup>6</sup> an ex-

amination of the traditional institutions showed clearly that the *Obaro* and *Alayere* were no more than *primus inter pares*. For instance, in Ayere there were five autonomous clans known collectively as *Aku intu n'uwu* or (*inhentu n'uwu*). These were *Ehuru*, *Ogba*, *Iruke*, *Ajiro* and *Okomi*. Each *Aku* had its own leader.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in Oweland, there were 13 autonomous clans, namely, *Atipa*, *Abata*, *Isoro*, *Ilemule*, *Idogba*, *Ijumu*, *Iras* and *Jeko*.<sup>8</sup> In governmental affairs, the *Obaro's* word was not necessarily law. He had, like the *Alayere*, to work in harmony with the senior chiefs for the day-to-day administration.

The triadic pattern of *Ona* (the way), *Onu* (right) and *Ohi* (left) which characterised the socio-political organisation of the Ijumu group, also failed to create conducive conditions for the emergence of paramount rulership.<sup>9</sup> In essence, the socio-political structure contained inherent weaknesses in the sense that no single ruler could successfully lord it over other ethnic groups or raise a large army to check external aggression. The Nupe invaders were conscious of this weakness and capitalised on it.

## Nupe Conquests and rule

The Nupe War is referred to as the *Ogun Anupe* or (*Ogun Tapa*) among the people of Owe, Oworo, Bunu, and Ijumu, and as *Ibon* in 'Yagbaland'.<sup>10</sup> The period 1845-1882 represented the conquest phase, at the end of which the entire northeast Yorubaland was firmly brought under Nupe rule.

The enervating fratricidal war which broke out soon after the death of Mallam Dendo in c. 1833, forced the main protagonists - Usman Zaki and Masaba to seek relief in northeast Yorubaland. This region was rich in human and material resources which the warring parties needed to prosecute the war. In this circumstance, the conquest and control of northeast Yorubaland became part of the strategy of the warring parties in Nupeland.

In late 1834, Usman Zaki and Masaba set up their capitals at Rabah and Lade respectively. The proximity of these positions to northeast Yorubaland facilitated its conquest. Attacks were launched almost simultaneously from the two capitals. In the period c. 1840-1850, Usman Zaki despatched a force under *Maiyaki* Mamudu Majigi to Bunu and Owe.<sup>11</sup> He attacked Kirri which was described as "a large and prosperous town" in Bunu.<sup>12</sup> Many people fled to *Oke-Kirri* (Kirri mountain) where large rocks were rolled down on the Nupe warriors. This method could not permanently check the Nupe advance. Kirri was conquered and many able bodied men were carried off as slaves. A tribute of 6,000 cowries was imposed.<sup>13</sup>

Kabba, a major Owe settlement, was the next to be invaded. A massive *odi* (city wall) surrounded the city. Lieutenant Cecil Forster Seymound Vandeleur described the length of the *odi* as extending "over a mile from one side to the other."<sup>14</sup> The exact age of the wall is unknown. However, the Owe tradition credits its building to *Obaro Odide* who reigned sometime in the 15th century.<sup>15</sup> If this account is correct, the *Odi* had been built long before the Nupe invasion. It had two main gates namely *asuta* gate located in the northern section, and the *aiyeteju* gate in the south.<sup>16</sup> The Owe sources are positive on the point that the news about the approaching Nupe was received from the fleeing Bunu refugees. Acting on this information, a unit of the



Owe fighting force moved out to check the Nupe. The first open battle was fought at Agura near the northern gate. The repeated Nupe cavalry charges forced the Owe warriors to take position within the city wall. Unable to gain entrance, the Nupe warriors ravaged the country-side with the objective of starving the people to death.<sup>17</sup> After a protracted fight, a truce was made and a tribute of 7,200 cowries was imposed on the town.<sup>18</sup>

So long as large Nupe forces remained in Kabba, the tribute was paid. However, towards the end of *Etsu* Usman Zaki's reign in c.1859, the strength of these forces was reduced and the people began to express openly their unwillingness to bear the burden of the tribute. This led to a general uprising. The revolting subjects congregated on the top of Igberi hill located outside the southern end of the city wall. This uprising was referred to as *Ogun Igberi* (Igberi War).<sup>19</sup> After gaining control of the town, the Nupe forces whose strength now increased substantially, surrounded the Igberi hill with the objective of starving the "rebels" to submission. After a long siege, the people were forced to enter into an agreement with the Nupe. The terms of agreement included an end to Nupe punitive expedition, an undertaking by the people to be loyal and to resume the payment of tribute.

Masaba's conquests can be divided into two phases. The first phase covered the period 1832-1859, while the period 1860-1873 represented the second phase. During the first phase, the main concern of Masaba was to dislodge Usman Zaki from Rabah, hence his conquest bid in northeast Yorubaland was sporadic. His other objective was to acquire slaves. Between 1833 and 1840, he despatched troops to Oworo, Agbaja, a populous centre in the region was smashed. This led to the scattering of the people.<sup>20</sup> Many were carried off as slaves, while some fled for safety on the top of Agbaja Plateau. The fall of Agbaja laid open the Oworo countryside for the Olukpo forces to subdue. Kakanda and Bassa Nge, the non-Yoruba groups, were also invaded. During this period, Masaba led some forces to west Yagbaland. Egbe, Ere, Oke-eri and Ejiba were attacked. These campaigns were however brought to an abrupt end in 1840 by the revolt in Lafiagi which forced Masaba out of Lade.<sup>21</sup> He escaped to Egbe where he raised an army to regain his capital territory which he re-occupied in 1845. The rebellion of Umar Barbushe (1850-1857) once more forced Masaba to flee, this time to Ilorin.<sup>22</sup> These developments made it difficult for Masaba to pursue with vigour his conquest of northeast Yorubaland during the first phase.

In the second phase (1860-1873), Masaba became the undisputed *Etsu* of Nupe with his capital at Bida. His campaigns were well planned, well coordinated, frequent and more aggressive than the first phase. These were made possible by a number of factors. First, he had a firm hold on the trade in the Nupe Kingdom, and was able to influence the European merchants to transact business through his accredited agents. By this arrangement, he was able to monopolise the sale of firearms in his kingdom. Masaba also exploited other avenues for guns. For instance, he applied to Lagos government in 1864 for "many guns, much powder and many bullets."<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, the decision of the British government in 1865 to gradually halt colonial expansion in West Africa favoured *Etsu* Masaba. His position was strengthened by the British in order to make him "strong enough to assist the development of

British trade."<sup>24</sup> To enable him to effect this, Masaba received a steady supply of firearms. As a result, he established a fairly rich arsenal and raised a formidable army.

From 1865-1868, Masaba's military campaigns were intensified in Yagbaland. Egbe was made the Nupe camp from where attacks were launched against the outlying territories. For instance, Muhmud Ibn Muhammad Saba (also known as Yerima Muhmud) led a large army from Egbe to Ejuku in east Yaba as the people revolted and asserted their independence from Nupe rule. Muhmud's expedition was therefore aimed at forcing them back to a tributary system. On their approach, many people fled southwards, while some took refuge in the rock cavity provided by Oke Yeu in Ejuku.<sup>25</sup> The Nupe were able to find their way to this cavity through the assistance of some captives. It was fumigated and the people inside were suffocated to death.<sup>26</sup> The fall of Ejuku struck panic among her immediate neighbours of Jege, Ponyan, and Ife-Olukotun. They were conquered without much difficulty.

Mopo and Majutu which were the major Isanlu settlements gave in without much resistance. Mopa, Okagi, and Amuro were also routed. As Yerima Muhmud was intensifying his military campaigns in east Yagba, Ayorinde, the *Osi Balogun* of Ibadan, in collaboration with the *Attah* of Ayede invaded Ogbe, Ijagbe and Okoloki. Yerima Muhmud and Ayorinde formed an alliance with the aim of assisting each other. It was also hoped that by this alliance, the two parties would respect each other's territories.<sup>27</sup> The alliance broke up as the Nupe were suspicious of the real intention of Ibadan.

By 1869, Gbede-Ijumu was besieged. Places conquered included Odda, Iluhagba and Agrigbon. Odda was the most populous in Gbede and its defeat led to a massive displacement of people.<sup>28</sup> Some found new settlements at Odokoro, Okoro, and Aiyegunle.

At Olle in Bunu, the Nupe forces met a stiff resistance. Reinforcement was ordered from Kabba, and after a protracted battle, the town capitulated. In sum, before the death of *Etsu* Masaba in 1873, large areas of Yagba, Gbede, Bunu and Oworo had been conquered. The conquered areas constituted about three quarters of north-east Yorubaland. The greater part of Ijumu was still free from Nupe control. The task of conquering this region fell to Umaru Majigi.

Umaru Majigi ruled as *Etsu* of Nupe from 1873 to 1882. He spent the first seven years of his reign in extending the frontier of Nupe Kingdom. Between 1878 and 1880, Ndako Damisa led a large force to southern Ijumu, Akoko and Igbirra Okene. The Ijumu settlements of Ekinrin-Adde, Iya (Iyamoye), Ife (Ufe), Egbada-Egga, and Ikoyi were overrun. Some of the people who escaped from Nupe onslaught founded new settlements, one of them was Ogidi.<sup>29</sup> Ndako Damisa also conquered in quick succession Ayere, Ikaram, Afin, Igashi and Ogbagi. But at Oka, he suffered reverses as its rugged landscape was unsuitable for the use of horses.<sup>30</sup> For similar reason, the Nupe were unable to overcome the Igbirra Okene.<sup>31</sup> In spite of these setbacks, *Etsu* Umaru Majigi was able to bring under the Nupe control virtually the entire northeast Yorubaland before his death in 1882.

The Nupe rulers proceeded to administer the conquered region through the *Ogba* system. The *Ogba* refers to the Nupe residents who served as the link between the

Nupe central government and the subject people.<sup>32</sup> As the sole representatives of the *Etsu*, the *Ogba* wielded immense power. Their principal functions were the collection of tribute, and ensuring the loyalty of the subject people to the Nupe government. The entire northeast Yorubaland was divided into fiefs which were controlled by the *Ogba*. These *Ogba* were rapacious in their tribute demands.<sup>33</sup>

Initially, the tribute was paid in cowries, but towards the close of 1890, the *Ogba* began to demand children and adults as tribute as the cowrie holdings of the people had been depleted. For instance, when Bishops Tugwell, Phillips, and Rev. C. E. Watts visited Ayere in 1894 the *Alayere* told them that the Nupe agents demanded their "wives and children for tribute."<sup>34</sup> In Yagba, parts of Owe, Ijumu and Akoko, the story was the same. The high-handedness of the *Ogba* and their insistence on the payment of tribute in human beings led to revolts in many areas.<sup>35</sup> Col. Frederick Lugard also noted in his diaries that the people were compelled "to pay tribute in boys and girls," and as a result they vehemently protested against paying with their own children.<sup>36</sup>

The policy of administration based on *Ogba* system was pursued vigorously by *Etsu* Maliki who reigned from 1882 to 1895. Ascending the throne at the end of the conquest phase, *Etsu* Maliki was able to direct his attention to consolidating the Nupe administration in the conquered territories. Although through the effective use of the *Ogba* system, *Etsu* Maliki was able to amass wealth, he made the people to further detest the Nupe rule. This was so because under Maliki, "taxes reached an almost insufferable height."<sup>37</sup> *Bunu*, *Oworo*, *Yagba*, *Akoko* and *Ijumu* people reached the nadir of their resources. As a result, the subject people became increasingly dissatisfied with the Nupe government. Local uprisings became frequent and widespread. Resistance movements were organised with the sole aim to overthrow the *Ogba* system and the Nupe rule.

## **Formation of Ogidi Grand Alliance and the Overthrow of Nupe rule: The Ekitiparapo style**

In 1894, the Ogidi alliance was formed with the sole objective of ending the Nupe imperialism. Before the formation of this alliance, uprisings were frequent in many parts of northeast Yorubaland. We have discussed the revolt at Kabba which culminated in the *Ogun Igberi*. Similar revolt broke out at Ejuku. The uprisings also spread to the Kukuruku (Afemai) areas of Ibie, Dochi, Uzenu, Upilla and Jodi. At first, the Nupe authorities considered the uprisings as a storm in a tea cup. But when one of the royal princes - Audu Yamma was ambushed and brutally killed by a group of angry Ife farmers in c. 1885,<sup>38</sup> the fact soon dawned on them that the uprising was a serious matter. The death of Audu Yamma revealed the depth of the peoples' discontentment with Nupe rule and the extent they were now prepared to go.

However, the tragic news of Audu's death brought immediate reprisal from Bida. *Maiyaki* Nda Jiya was despatched to the scene to restore order. Before this was done, Ife had already entered into alliance with Ejuku, Ejiba, Ogbom, Ogbe, Eri, Takete, Ega and Lukekerri - all in Yagba. When *Maiyaki* Jiya's forces arrived, they discovered to their amazement that it was a general revolt and not just a local uprising at



Iffe. A large reinforcement was called for, and this was despatched under Epotun Abubakar and Shaaba Momodu. The revolting Yagbas congregated at Takete near River Oyi to work out the logistics. Attempt to secure the support of Lagos government failed as they were referred to the Royal Niger Company (R.N.C) under whose sphere of influence Yagba fell. Furthermore, the revolting groups could not offer a formidable pitch battle. The Nupe forces which camped near Jagbe, east of Oyi River moved against the revolting Yagba, fighting them in places like Takete, Isanlu and Wuta. Though the revolt in Yagba was suppressed, the Nupe were soon faced with a more formidable revolt at Ogidi.

Ogidi was one of the several new settlements founded by the Nupe War refugees. The lesson of the revolt in Yagba and other parts of northeast Yorubaland was not lost on these refugees. They knew that these revolts failed because there was no unity of purpose among the revolting subjects. Hitherto, reactions against Nupe rule were not articulated. Leadership tussle and the pride attached to communal autonomy made concerted efforts against the Nupe difficult. They came to the conclusion that it was only by adopting the cooperative spirit of the Ekitiparapo that Nupe rule could be dismantled.

At this point, some striking similarities can be drawn in the situation that led to the formation of Ekitiparapo, and the Ogidi grand alliance. In the second half of the 19th century, there was a general discontentment against the activities of Ibadan *Ajele* in many parts of Yorubaland.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, in the northeast Yorubaland, the people were increasingly dissatisfied with the Nupe *Ogba* and Nupe rule. The result was that in both areas, the atmosphere was charged and only required a spark to set the regions ablaze. In the case of the central Yorubaland, it was the action of Oyepetun, the Ibadan *Ajele* at Oke-Mesi which brought matters to a head. According to oral tradition and some authoritative sources,<sup>40</sup> Oyepetun indecently assaulted Fabunmi's wife during the sacred *Erinle* festival. To make matters worse, a group of Ibadan war-boys also seized the food items and palm wine at *Odo-Erinle* shrine where Fabunmi and his visitors were feasting and dancing. In retaliation, Fabunmi beheaded the Ibadan *Ajele*. The news of Fabunmi's action spread like wild fire. Several Ibadan citizens were put to the sword at Ila, Ilesa and many other Ekiti communities.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Fabunmi despatched emissaries to Ekiti, Ijesa and Akoko towns calling on them to rise to the occasion and to put an end to Ibadan imperialism. The people responded positively. Armed contingents were sent from several Ekiti communities, including Otun, Idó, Akure, Ijesa, and Akoko. Thus in 1879 Ekitiparapo was formed with the sole aim of ending Ibadan imperialism.<sup>42</sup>

Similarly, the unguided action of Nupe military commander known as Sonku created a situation which led to the formation of Ogidi grand alliance. Sonku sparked off a revolt in Ayere in 1894 when he ordered a cow, which was kept in the pen of *Alayere* Ekundina I for ritual purpose to be slaughtered.<sup>43</sup> This was an abomination to the people. A messenger sent to Sonku by the *Alayere* Ekundina, for an explanation was also killed. This was the last straw that broke the camel's back. Ekundina called his people to take up arms. The Nupe camp was set ablaze and in the inferno, Sonku and Nupe warriors perished. The news of Ekundina's action spread to the neighbouring communities. Like Fabunmi, he sent out emissaries to Ogidi, Aduge,



Ogale, Ikaram, Isua, Afin, Ogbagi and Iffe urging them to unite like the Ekitiparapo to end the Nupe imperialism. It should be stressed that the events that led to the formation of Ekitiparapo were still fresh in the minds of the Ayere people and their neighbours. Indeed, some Akoko communities, as earlier indicated, were actively involved in the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War. The *Alayere* was convinced that it was only through a concerted effort and a team spirit, which the Ekiti alliance represented, that could rescue the people from the Nupe oppressive rule. In point of fact, the Ayere sources described the formation of Ogidi grand alliance of 1894 as a replica of Ekitiparapo. Though this view is debatable, it does show the extent the people had derived inspiration from the Ekitiparapo of 1879. The Ogidi grand alliance comprised the following communities: Ogidi, Ayere, Aduge, Ekinrin-Adde, Iffe (Ufe), Ogale - from Ijumu group; and Isua, Ikaram, Ogbagi, Afin, Igashi, Daga, Esuku and Oji from Akoko area. These allied groups shared common ground of complaints against the Nupe, in the same way as the groups that made up Ekitiparapo shared common ground of complaints against Ibadan. The Nupe rule and the excesses of the Nupe *Ogba* were roundly condemned by the Ogidi allied forces just as Ibadan imperialism and the excesses of Ibadan *Ajele* were denounced unreservedly by the Ekiti allied groups.

Another source of dissatisfaction among the Ogidi allied forces was the ascendancy of *Obaro* of Kabba under the Nupe rule. After the *Ogun Igberi*, the *Obaro* collaborated with Nupe and contributed immensely to the Nupe colonial expansion in Ijumu and Akoko areas. In recognition of his unalloyed loyalty, the *Obaro's* jurisdiction was extended over Ijumu and Akoko areas. The anti-Owe movement was firmly rooted among the ethnic groups which made up the alliance. Hence the Ogidi grand alliance was formed in late 1894 primarily to overthrow the Nupe rule and to restrict the *Obaro's* jurisdiction to his traditional area of Owe.

Unlike the Yagba revolt, the Ogidi grand alliance was better organised and more formidable. The selection of a war leader was amicably resolved by the appointment of Agenhun (Agaun) of Esuku. Just as Fabunmi of Ekitiparapo had to step down for *Seriki Ogedemgbe*, the *Alayere* also stepped down for Agenhun who was unanimously acclaimed as a seasoned warrior leader. The Ayere sources confirmed that Agenhun participated in the Ekitiparapo war. Unit commanders were also selected; some of whom were Olumodeji of Ayere, <sup>44</sup> Ajakaiye of Ogidi and Ajamba of Oji. The allied forces congregated on the Ayinoro hill at Ogidi. Seasoned Igbirra archers were also employed. These further strengthened the striking capability of the forces. Some men were recruited as spies who were placed under the command of the *Elęsu*. <sup>45</sup> These spies were stationed at vantage points to monitor the movements of the Nupe forces, thus forestalling any sudden attack from the enemies.

Support for the grand alliance was also solid and spontaneous. They received support from other parts of Yorubaland; especially from among the Ekiti people in the present day Ondo State. Large quantities of arms and ammunition were purchased from Lagos and the neighbouring Ekiti communities. Among the firearms obtained were the long barrelled flint-lock guns of the Arab type. Furthermore, as the Nupe cavalry charges could not be easily checked in an open battle field, they took position on Ayinoro hill which offered a defensive vantage point.



Thus in organisation, strategy, and military deployment, the Ogidi grand alliance was well conceived. Meanwhile, a new Etsu of Nupe had been installed at Bida in 1895. He was *Etsu* Abubakar under whose command, the Yagba revolt was suppressed. At first the *Etsu* attempted to contain the Ogidi revolt through diplomacy. He promised to introduce a package of reforms which would ensure good government and "to stop the plundering and selling of the people from the villages and district of Banoo (Bunu) Okoko (Akoko) and Yagba."<sup>46</sup> The people doubted the genuineness of his purported reforms, and would not shrink in their determination to end Nupe imperialism. *Etsu* Abubakar was forced to face the reality of the situation. To crush the revolt, he despatched Makun Momadu in 1896 with a strong force of about 6,000.<sup>47</sup> Makun set up his military camp near Udi hill about four miles from Kabba. In a paper delivered at Burlington House, London in June 1897, Lieutenant Seymour Vandeleur described this camp as consisting "enormous collection of thatched huts and enclosures covering over a square mile of country."<sup>48</sup>

Makun, however could not dislodge the allied forces for a number of reasons. First, the alliance which he was ordered to crush was a formidable one. Second, he was slow to act in a situation that called for swift action. He spent valuable time setting up a camp and for about three months, he could not take the offensive, thus giving the allied forces much time to fortify their position. When Makun finally took the offensive, he had to contend with a solidly organised and impregnable alliance. The allied forces utilized, to the maximum effect, their defensive position on the Ayinoro hill. The archers showered poisoned arrows on the invaders. The cavalry charges were neutralised. Their old tactics of harrying and starving the opponents to submission were rendered ineffective as they could not penetrate or disrupt the supply lines of the allied forces. The two forces seemed evenly matched, and were still fighting when the Royal Niger Company (R.N.C.) troops arrived at the scene on 14 January 1897.<sup>49</sup>

The R.N.C. took the offensive against the Nupe because the Nupe colonial expansion was a threat to the growth of the company in the Niger - Benue confluence. Moreover, the Nupe authorities had consistently challenged the R.N.C. claim that Nupe kingdom fell under its sphere of influence. This act did a great deal of damage to the image of the company.<sup>50</sup> Finally, the military activities of the Nupe disrupted trade in the lower Niger area which greatly hurt the interests of the company. George Goldie, the company's leader, felt that a way out to redeem the sagging image of the company was to dislodge the Nupe forces. With 403 troops and 300 carriers Goldie marched against the Nupe at Kabba.<sup>51</sup> Makun got wind of the approach of the R.N.C. troops, and made a hasty retreat northwards to Bida. George Goldie, leading the company forces, burnt down the Nupe camp and proclaimed the freedom of the northeast Yorubaland from the Nupe rule at Kabba town. Following the collapse of the Nupe rule, the Ogidi grand alliance was dissolved.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, the 19th century Nupe imperialism in the northeast Yorubaland has been stressed. To the generality of the people in the region, the Nupe rule was repressive and the *Ogba* system vicious. This sparked off revolts in many parts of northeast

Yorubaland. The formation of the Ogidi grand alliance in 1894 marked a turning point in the struggle to end Nupe Imperialism. To a great extent, the Ogidi alliance reflected the cooperative spirit of *Ekitiparapo*. In the first place, the Ogidi allied groups were quick to compare the general historical developments in the northeast Yorubaland with the rest of Yorubaland. For instance, the Nupe imperialism was compared with the Ibadan imperialism. It was thus felt that just as Ekitiparapo was formed to end Ibadan imperialism, so also the Ogidi allied forces should unite against Nupe imperialism. The Ogidi grand alliance lived up to expectation in this respect. Throughout the period of the war (1894-1897), the allied groups stayed and fought together. As a result the Nupe forces could not overcome the Ogidi alliance just as Ibadan could not dislodge the Ekitiparapo.

However, unlike Ekitiparapo, the British were never invited to intervene in the conflict with the Nupe. The R.N.C. had its own grievances against the Nupe overlords, and its aim was to crush the Nupe forces. Nevertheless, Ekitiparapo was a source of inspiration to the members of Ogidi grand alliance. By emulating the team spirit of Ekitiparapo, the Ogidi grand alliance was able to stoutly resist the Nupe army, and thereby substantially paved the way for the overthrow of the Nupe rule in the northeast Yorubaland.

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## **Chapter Thirty Seven**

# **Reflections of War in some Ekiti Festivals**

**J.R.O. Ojo**

### **Introduction**

There are few societies without some form of warfare. Indeed it has been asserted that at least a good half of the history of political development has been in one way or another a history of wars. It has also been suggested that political organisation is concerned with the use of force both within the community and against external foes.<sup>1</sup> Even if one does not agree with this extreme view, warfare as an aspect of political organisation is linked, like economics, with the development of political systems especially in complex societies where war is for conquest and economic exploitation. Wars are prosecuted with weapons, and the techniques of destruction employed have been man's concern from the beginning of history. A large part of the history of material culture and social organisation has been the history of the development of lethal weapons and their application to human beings.<sup>2</sup>

In Africa, the historical sequence of rock art has been periodised with the depiction of weapons by the ancient artists. According to Frank Willett,<sup>3</sup> the earliest period of Saharan rock art shows people hunting with clubs, throwing sticks axes, bows ... and arrows but no spears. This is followed by the pastoralists and their cattle and the depiction of bows and arrows. The next period shows horses and chariots, a few bows and arrows, and the appearance of new weapons - spears, round shields, daggers hanging from forearm, as well as plumed head dresses. The last period is characterised by camels and present day desert animals.

Though there is little evidence in the Sahara of conflicts between human groups, in Southern Africa, there is abundant evidence in pictures which depict constant struggles between the indigenous peoples - Khoikhoi and the Bantu armed with spears and shields, the San using bows and arrows as well as spears; and in the last phase, Europeans with guns and horses.

Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, warfare is an important part of their history. As with other nations' historical development, much of what happened in the past was a struggle for power. Traditional history is very much concerned with warfare, Samuel

Johnson in his *History of the Yorubas* mentioned 50 wars in Yorubaland from about 1813 to 1893.

War has its own customs, creeds and artifacts. The intention of this paper is to demonstrate the survival of some of the armaments of Yoruba Wars in ceremonies. Robert Smith pointed out that the physical remains of past wars survive in the form of weapons in palaces, compounds and shrines and that some weapons survive in ceremonial versions.<sup>4</sup> And as will be shown shortly, weapons are used in calendrical rituals which reflect the wars of the past.

### **Elefon Festival, Igbole Ekiti**

It has often been asserted that the hilly nature of Ekiti and other parts of northeastern Yoruba country, such as Igbomina, prevented the ingress, or impeded the progress of foreign invaders; but not for long. As pointed out elsewhere, the echoes of war, in Ekiti and Igbomina rituals, are reflections of wars waged against the people of the area from as early as the 16th to the 19th century by Benin, Oyo and later Ibadan.<sup>5</sup> This paper narrates certain phases of some festivals and relates the actions, *dramatis personae* and artifacts, especially weapons, to historical data.

The setting is Igbole Ekiti, a small community in Ekiti country, and the festival is Elefon, an annual festival during which an appropriately costumed figure accompanied by hunters and the warrior age grades is the centre of attraction. While the hunters carry guns, the warriors carrying spears and ceremonial iron maces, dance to the rhythm of *bembe* war drums. Also heard during the festival are the sounds of deer horn trumpets and wooden picolos associated with war, Ogun festival and times of social crisis.

The following 'story' was collected in Igbole about Elefon festival:

A long time ago, as the people were celebrating the annual festival, warring hordes surprised the revellers, carrying them and the masquerade carved headpiece to Ikere. Elefon was eventually returned to Igbole after a series of inexplicable calamities in Ikere was attributed to the presence of Elefon which was then deposited at the Osi entry to the town where it was discovered at dawn by people going to the farm. The matter was reported to the elders who sent hunters to investigate. When the report was confirmed, warriors were despatched to bring the masquerade home. On arrival at the spot where Elefon had been deposited, the surrounding forest was combed and guns fired into the air to frighten any invaders in case the return of the masquerade was a ruse to capture the remnants of the people left in the town. The masquerade was taken into town, but thereafter, lookouts were posted on the outskirts of the town to forestall any surprise attack.

### **Historical implications**

This story contains certain historical facts. According to the late Mosgr. Oguntuyi, Benin in league with Ikere, attacked Ado whose inhabitants retreated to a place near



Ifaki. Benin troops encamped near Iyin which they captured, and went on to subdue Igede, Awo, Are, Afao and Agbado whose inhabitants were resettled in Ikere. Oguntuyi placed these events at the beginning of the 19th century. But according to Egharevba, Ewuare the Great captured towns in Ikere and Ekiti country as early as the 16th century. Later Benin expeditions in the 19th century under Osemwede conquered Akure and many Ekiti towns and villages, and for several years made Otun their base. Other outposts were Akure and Ikere whose inhabitants acted as guides for Benin troops.<sup>6</sup>

Igbole may have in fact been attacked by Benin troops who then resettled the people in Ikere. Indeed Igbole people claim that not only is there an Igbole quarter in Ikere, but Elefon is also performed there. A 67 year old Igbole man who taught in Ikere in the 1930s confirmed this. The Epa masquerade, similar to Elefon, used to be performed in Ikere, as in most other Ekiti and northeastern Yoruba communities. Perhaps then there was an Igbole quarter in Ikere which was so small that it was assimilated with quarters peopled by other captives.

Among the artifacts used in Elefon festival are bronze bells which resemble Benin types. An aged informant said the bells were made in Obo, from where the blunt ceremonial swords used in the festival also came. Now, according to Akintoye, Obo was a Benin outpost from where troops made sorties into Igbomina territory. It was also a settlement for Benin people who practised peaceful occupation such as bronze casting.<sup>7</sup>

There are other elements in the story of Elefon which constitute the common and essential features of Yoruba warfare. Some of these are: warriors, hunters, weapons such as spears, swords and guns, war tactics such as ambushes. These will now be discussed.

## Warriors

The principal *dramatis personae* in any war are soldiers and their commanders. The warrior's age grade is the most able bodied of the age sets in Yorubaland. This is particularly true of Ekiti where, as Fadipe pointed out, age sets constitute a "living institution." In Igbole the age sets are *Owere* (18-22 years), *Egiri* (23-27), *Ijogun* (28-31 years) and *Elegbe* (32-36 years). The fighting men; *Ipaye* and *Enumo* (the elders). In Otun there are *Igemo* (12-19 years), *Eso* (19-21), *Ologun*, fighting men, *Oye Ihare* and *Oye Agba*. Oguntuyi thinks that Benin and later Ibadan invasions led to the reorganisation of age grades into war groups but it may be more correct to say that it added more onerous tasks to their role.<sup>8</sup>

In Igbole the fighting men are also known as *Ikan* with a leader *Eleekan* (*Olori ikan*) who, carrying ancient spears, leads his group to form a guard of honour at the town entrance where the Ikere were said to have entered the town. In the past, invaders often struck on market days and festival times when there were large concentrations of people least prepared to defend themselves. This is one of the reasons why hunters are so evident when the images of *Ogun* in the form of masked figures are paraded through the town with the entire population in attendance during *Ogun* festival in Ire-Ekiti.<sup>9</sup>

During the *Are* ceremony at Ilofa, warrior age grades, maskers and elders are

prominent. The ceremony opened with Eguna, fire branding dance, led by the warriors carrying lighted grass torches as people sing;

the firebrands have come, the wicked Ofa are coming: the people of Ife are coming; no more people behind, let every one warn his children.

On the seventh and penultimate day, three warriors and the king with two female attendants offer sacrifices at the Ifa grove.<sup>10</sup>

The reference to Ife here recalls the events after the Jalumi War when the allied forces of Ekiti, Ijesa and Ilorin were defeated by Ibadan whose unwilling allies Ife, and the willing Modakeke arrived too late for the action, but followed up the chase taking Ilofa; and joined the Ibadan in taking other towns including Ora, Erinmope, Gogo and Omuaran. That was not the first time the area was ravaged by war. In 1847, Ekan, Omuaran, Ilofa, Iyapa, Oro, Usi and Isan among others were overrun.<sup>11</sup>

If the Ilofa celebrants were justified in mentioning Ife, the case of Ofa is that of mistaken identity. Ofa has been subject to Ilorin from early 1800s, later defended by Ibadan, it finally fell to Ilorin forces in July, 1887.<sup>12</sup> Any hostile force from that direction is more likely to be that of Ilorin. The firebranding recalls the burning and pillage which may accompany the rampage of a victorious army.

At Omuaran, *Epa* festival is organised by fugitives from Ora which was broken up in the 19th century by Ibadan army led by Ajayi Ogboriefon.<sup>13</sup> The main participants include hunters and maskers among which are *Oloko* (leopard) and *Ologun*, representing a warrior on horseback. One of the opening rites is a sacrifice at the *Oro* (ancestral spirit) grove near the site of their former settlement. On the first day, as the principal mask *Oloko* jumped on a mound, the hunters fired their guns. The ceremony ended with a sacrifice to Ogun, the god of war.

At Imode (Ilofa district) a town that was captured by the Ibadan in 1847, and which formed the base of their last expedition into Ekitiland in 1875, the *Eji* ceremony involves the king, priest and *amasa*, shield bearer, carrying a rectangular basket work shield with which to ward off danger from the community.<sup>14</sup> The shield bearer's function is similar to what was observed during *Okotoroso* ceremony in Ayetoro (formerly Iyapa) where the *Asawo* (chief priest of the Osanyin cult) heads all the masked cults some of which are *Epa*, *Eriru*, *Okotoroso*, *Eigunsayin*. While the last is celebrated in August with others not mentioned here, the first three appear during a nine day cycle in June. *Epa* ends on the seventh day of the cycle and *Eriru* ends in the early afternoon of the ninth day after which *Okotoroso*, 'the father of masquerades,' rounds off the cycle the same day.

Before the masquerade makes its public appearance, the following objects are displayed with the headpiece in the *Asawo*'s house - a bunch of *atori* whips, the base tied with cowries and then put, base first, into a charm pot; fresh palm fronds tied to a short stick; animal horn stuffed with fern plant; and a wrought iron staff variously used in this area in Ifa, Osanyin and other cults. The masquerade, 'a ferocious one' led on a chain by a mascot, uses the wrought iron staff as a walking stick, and at specific points during the fast procession round the town, sits on a cylindrical bark box of the type used as container for Ifa esoteric emblems.

At specified points, he sticks the wrought iron staff in the ground, the shield

bearers face the masquerade and he lashes at them with the various objects - fern plant, *atori*, palm fronds as they are handed to him. The shield bearers try to ward off the blows with their shields. It is safe to surmise that they are warding off mystical rather than physical dangers from themselves on behalf of the community.<sup>15</sup>

## Rituals and medicine

The medicinal components of this (and other) ceremonies must be viewed in relation to preparations for war, which apart from physical preparations (mobilising troops and obtaining weapons), include ritual and ceremonial preparations by ritual specialists. Sacred objects also receive special treatment.<sup>16</sup>

In Oyo and later Ibadan warfare, the *war staff* was kept with the *Balogun* and taken outside the town in preparation for war. As described by Johnson;

it consisted of a bamboo pole four feet high, 2½ inches in diameter, wrapped all over with charms. It had a globular head, and the whole was encased in leather with charms hanging all over it.

It was dedicated to Oranyan and obtained from Ife. A photograph published by Mosgr. Oguntuyi of the *war staff* belonging to Aduloju of Ado reminds one of Johnson's description even though it has no casing.<sup>17</sup> Smith described the war standard as a wooden or iron staff with a piece of cloth usually attached, the alternative name *Opaga* reminds one of *Opagara*, a thin bamboo staff held by *Epa* masquerades at rest in Ido-Ekiti.

Before any campaign, the *war staff* must be propitiated. On 16 December 1866, when Ibadan was about to attack Ilesa, the *war staff* was propitiated and the following day, the *standard* was out on the command of Akere who sacrificed to Oranyan on 20 December before embarking on an expedition to Ilesa. Also Aduloju propitiated the sword of Oranyan with the hope of joining the allies at Kiriji.

*Obalufon* has also been mentioned in connection with war. Fadipe states that returning warriors wait outside the town walls until sacrifices have been made to the local *Obalufon*, god of warriors. Ajisafe states that someone who caused a feud between Itoku and Igbein was immolated at *Obalufon* shrine. In Igbole, *Elefon* the 'war masquerade' danced at some point to *Obalufon* drums and in Ado, *Epa* is connected with rites to *Obalufon*. *Eruan* the chief custodian of *Epa* is said to have been posted to Irona on the outskirts of the town to check the incursions of Ilawe and Igbara Odo.

*Ogun* is another deity connected with war. Akintoye has described the *Ogun* shrine in a grove at the centre of the confederate camp during the Kiriji War. Johnson narrated the incident at Ibadan when Ogedengbe was to have been executed at the altar of *Ogun*, but after passionate pleas to *Ogunmola*, he was pardoned. Father Oguntuyi also gathered from Ikoro traditions that the reasons why they were conquered by Ibadan was that after a prolonged stalemate, Ibadan suggested that both sides propitiate *Ogun* for a whole day, leaving all weapons together in one place till the following day. But Ibadan collected these in the night and fell on Ikoro.<sup>18</sup>

Medicine was very important to Yoruba warriors. Ajaka who waged wars against the Nupe as well as his own subjects including the *Onikoyi*, the *Olugbon* and the *Aresa* had "medicine men" from all over the empire who made charms for him. And



during the Kiriji War, the *Alaafin* sent a few fighting men and a *Babalawo* who was to make charms for Ibadan's success; but the Ibadan thought the action of the priest would be to the contrary. Jones noted the wearing of charms and war dresses studded with cowries and the teeth of wild animals among the Egba, whilst in the Kiriji camp, Holley noted mascots at the door of the Commander-in-Chief of the confederate army, as well as thousands of talismans fabricated by ingenious Muslims. A memorable photograph taken about 1888 shows Ogedengbe wearing a jacket loaded with charms. One of his attendants had a padded apron reminiscent of that described by Captain Jones.<sup>19</sup>

## War and Arts

A vast amount of material in the plastic and literary arts exist to show that wars are reflected not only in rituals, but also in art and literature. Father Carrol says that artists such as Areogun born at Osi in grassy plains of Ekitiland, south of which Ilorin cavalry feared to go because of ambushes, recorded horrors of war in form of dry season slave raids which went on until *pax Britannica*. Apart from horse riders carrying various weapons, there are captives with ropes round their necks and waists. There is an amusing rendering of an archer with a cross bow, the arrow in his mouth, raising his left hand with which he wanted to draw the bow before putting the arrow.<sup>20</sup>

The equestrian figures on masquerade headpieces reflect the importance of cavalry in Yoruba warfare. The basis of Oyo army was cavalry, but they were over shadowed by superior Nupe and later Ilorin cavalry. Ibadan army did not make use of cavalry on a large scale. In any case, the most rapacious cavalier men (to the chagrin of Oyo, Ibadan and especially the Ekiti) were the Fulani and their Ilorin allies.

The impression of the Ibadan, whose commanders were sometimes mounted in their Ekiti campaigns has been summed up by Johnson who wrote that Ibadan war boys

"came up with ... Bida cavalry ... seated erect on powerful horses, their spears ... of burnished brass ... glittered in the noon-day sun."

From such figures, the Ekiti derive such names as *Aga bi Elesin*, "tall as a horse rider," given to stout tall people.

There are also songs which warn: *Adamu de Elempe* (Adamu is here, the Elempe) which in Ila has been translated into a huge carving of a horse rider. *Elempe*, a mythical Nupe warrior king also occurs on doors from Osi-Ilorin. Adamu was in fact a real person who led raids into Ila and other places. But the depiction of horse riders and warriors go further back. Leo Frobenius recollected a tradition that the representation of Sango as a horse rider started in the reign of one of the *Alaafin* in exile at Borgu. This has been placed in the 16th century when Oyo adopted the use of cavalry. When Clapperton was in Oyo Ile in 1826 he described carvings depicting riders on horseback leading slaves, and procession of warriors.<sup>21</sup>

Apart from carved doors and posts, horse riders are depicted on *Epa* and *Elefon* masquerade headpieces. Sometimes identified with deities who saved the people from invaders, they are more often referred to as *Jagunjagun* and *Ologun*, warriors, and used in ceremonies in which warrior age grades singing war songs, beating war



drums and carrying antiquated weapons, leave no one in doubt that he is witnessing re-enactments of past wars. The ceremonies are meant to solicit help from the gods by drawing power from beings mightier than they. In some Ekiti ceremonies, the people sing *Ologun ba an ja*, "warrior fight them" (their foes). In other versions of this song, references are made to *ekun (oloko)* leopard. Indeed at Omuaran, there are headpieces representing both *Ologun* and *Oloko*, the latter considered important because it has teeth and claws to fight with. What is important here is that the participants were wishing for the ferocious attributes of the leopard. This will come in handy during combats. The teeth and claws of such animals are incorporated into warriors' costumes, while the skin, which forms part of warriors' dress, occurs in the praise poem of *Onikoyi* "who leads the battle and uses leopard skin to brush the dew."<sup>22</sup>

## Conclusion

Masquerade festivals which constitute a rich source of data for Nigerian history has been amply demonstrated by participants in a symposium on Masquerades in Nigerian history and Culture.<sup>23</sup> In this paper, attention has been focused on northeastern Yorubaland where it was found that masquerade festivals in small communities not only reflect the general history of the area, but that some of the elements of the festivals are linked directly with the bellicose events in the various communities during the turbulent years of the 19th century and even earlier.

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Igbole traditions (collected in the late 30s/earlier 40s) place Benin invasions in the 17th century during the reign of the third remembered king who, like his successor, reigned over the remnants of his people, while others fled to the relative safety of Ido and Ifaki. The fifth king (died early 19th century), succeeded in reassembling the scattered elements, perhaps at a time when Benin power was waning.

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## Chapter Thirty Eight

# Language in Ethnic Rivalries: An Analysis of Ethnocentric Use of Yoruba in 19th Century Yorubaland

Niyi Oladeji

*A a ki nwaye,  
K'a ma l'arun kan l'ara.  
Ija 'gboro l'arun Ibadan  
Ma-su, ma-to ni t'Eko  
Ijo ola ni t'Oyo  
Agbada nla ni t'ilu Ilorin  
Ijakadi ni t'Ofa*

(No one exists in this world,  
Without an innate weakness:  
Street violence is that of Ibadan;  
Lack of space for conveniences is that of Lagos  
Aristocratic dancing is that of Oyo;  
Voluminous apparel is that of Ilorin;  
Wrestling is that of Ofa.)

— Oyo Yoruba saying

## Preamble

It is a universally acknowledged irony of the human situation that while language can, on one hand, serve as a cementing and homogenising force in the international affairs of human beings, it can, on the other hand serve as a hinge to which all inter-human, inter-ethnic and international animosities, rivalries, and pettinesses are attached. Indeed, the Hebrew Bible would want its readers to believe that the multiplicity of 'tongues' was deliberately foisted by God on humanity to foredoom a possible unity of the human race with its disastrous portents for its creator. The contemporary human community, made up of over three billion people, is divided into roughly 200 nation-states using myriads of languages. While it is true that most

of these nation-states are forever finding one excuse or another to bicker with one another, language has often served as an agent of international accord and cohesive international activities.

This scenario is not too dissimilar to the one that existed in the 19th century in that South-Western part of the geographical area now known as Nigeria, where one dialect or another of the Yoruba language was used as the mother-tongue or a lingua franca or an auxiliary language. At the beginning of the century, before the advent of the British colonisers and its attendant "standardisation" of Yoruba, the language and dialect situation was extremely diverse as stated by Rev. Samuel Johnson in his seminal and monumental work, *The History of The Yorubas*.<sup>1</sup> In modern and demographic terms the situation can be described thus: There were five main dialects of the language viz. Oyo, Ijebu, Egba, Ijesa and Ondo. Some of these five main dialects had several sub-dialects. Egba-Oke-Ona and Egba Gbagura were sub-dialects of the Egba dialect and Remo was regarded as a sub-dialect of the Ijebu dialect.

Although the speakers of these dialects of Yoruba now regard themselves as belonging to one ethnic stock, the early 19th century was a period of intense rivalry between these kingdoms in Yorubaland culminating in the fratricidal civil wars that ended all the wars - the Kiriji War.

Because of the virtual non-existence at this time of any other form of inter-communal communication system, language and its dialects were the main forms of communication throughout the land. The radio, telephone and television were about a century-and-a-half away. The first motor-road in Nigeria, the Oyo-Ibadan road, was not built until nearly a century later in 1905 and the first aeroplane was not to take to the skies anywhere in the world until 1903. In essence, the communication culture in Yorubaland at the time was what could be described as bush-communication culture. The pivot of the bush-communication culture was the language as conveyed by the human voice, aided by speech-aping gadgets like the talking-drum, the *tianko*<sup>2</sup> and diverse kinds of bells and gongs and non-verbal symbols like icons situated along bush-paths. In a bush-communication culture all the nuances of languages, subtle or not so subtle, attain very important dimensions for the decoder of a language code, for any message that may be discernible from it may mean life or death to a large number of people.

In this kind of situation, language usages become indices to inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic identity, signallers of allegiance focus, and pointers or identifiers of forces inimical to particular ethnic or sub-ethnic interests. Naturally, to project a group's identity and paint rival ethnic groups in distasteful and unpleasant colours certain language devices are employed by the group. These language devices can take the form of well-known language phenomena like *similes*, *metaphors*, *proverbs*, *idioms* and other stock expressions brought into use from time to time. The devices can take the form of songs created for specific occasions or anecdotes created for the sole purpose of vilifying members of a rival ethnic group.

In every situation where you have intense ethno-cultural and ethno-linguistic rivalries "ethnic stereotyping" is one of the most potent means of perpetrating inter-ethnic discrimination. In the United States of America, for example, the ascendant and dominant white Anglo-Saxon protestant (WASP) group cuts the other ethnic



groups into stereotypes so as to relate to these groups in a paternalising and condescending manner. To a WASP a black American is either a thief, a football player or an entertainer: the Irishman is a quarrelsome drunk, the Jew is a hoarder, a cheat, and a miser. A situation akin to what now exists in the United States of America was discernible in Yorubaland in the 19th century. There were hundreds of stock expressions created to encapsulate one group's prejudice against the other. Here are a few examples:

The Oyo of the 19th century metropolis were regarded as cunning and slippery. So, other groups created these sayings to illustrate their perception and warn the non-Oyo Yoruba to be thoughtful and wary in their dealings with the Oyo.

- (a) *Oyo dobale inu re losoo*  
(When an Oyo man is lying or prostrating before you His mind and intentions are standing erect.)
- (b) *Oyo ki i lo, awon nbo ni*  
(An Oyo man would never tell you he is leaving you. He would say he is coming when he is going.)
- (c) *Oyo A-yo 'mo-sile*  
(The Oyo, an expert at sneaking away without notice).
- (d) *A bun o n'isu l'Oyo o nyo*  
*O ti r'igi ti oo fi see na*  
(You get a gift of yams in Oyo and you are jubilating; do you have any firewood to cook it with?)<sup>3</sup>

Because the metropolitan Oyo were the military and political rulers of most of Yorubaland, they were naturally the target of a lot of stereotyping witticisms. Because on most occasions they used other Oyo subethnic groups like the Ibadan, the Ogbomoso and the Ijaye to fight by proxy, they were regarded as lazy and exploitative. When in 1893 a British expeditionary force invaded the metropolis and forced the *Alaafin* to flee briefly, the other Yoruba groups particularly the Ijebu, Ijesa and even the Ibadan relished and celebrated the brief discomfiture of the all-powerful *Alaafin* and the ignominy attendant upon his being compelled to flee the palace when mortar shells started landing in the courtyard of the palace. To commemorate the incident, this saying was added to the language repertoire of Yoruba.

*Ope Ijaiye l'a ba bi niyin Ogun Ogunmola,*  
*Ara Oyo l'a ba bi niyin Ogun Alupepe*  
(The palm trees of Ijaiye are in the best position  
to describe the ferocity of Ogunmola's firepower,  
The Oyo man is in the best position to describe the  
terror of the Alupepe War.)<sup>4</sup>

Young Ibadan adolescents took to the streets of Ibadan singing this song.

*Ara Oyo a-da-ma-le-se,*  
*Ara Oyo a-da-ma-le-se;*  
*Ko bo bata to fi kan lugbe o;*  
*Ara Oyo a-da-ma-le-se.*

(The Oyo man cannot solve the problem he himself created;  
He was too scared to remove his shoes before he bolted into the bush;  
The Oyo man cannot solve the problem he himself created).

Of course, the metropolitan Oyo gave as much as they took. They had always regarded the Ibadan as kleptomaniac ruffians, so, their street singers created this song:

*Soja nbo wa o,  
Ti o mu.  
Soja nbo wa o,  
Ti o mu.  
Igara Ibadan,  
To ji mi l'elubo.  
Soja nbo wa o  
Ti o mu.  
(A soldier is coming  
To arrest him.  
A soldier is coming  
To arrest him.  
The Ibadan robber  
Who stole my yamflour,  
A soldier is coming  
To arrest him.)*

The beginning and the middle of the century witnessed the military ascendancy of Ibadan and the subjugation of most sub-ethnic groups in Yorubaland. It is to be expected that the Ibadan would have a disdain for, and a poor opinion of the military capabilities of the other ethnic groups especially the Ijebu and the Egba whom they defeated in diverse battles spanning a long period of time. Many songs and sayings were in circulation in Ibadan to illustrate this situation during the century. These are two examples of songs stereotyping the Egba as lazy and spineless warriors in the aftermath of the Ijaiye and the Iperu Wars.

- (a) *Kanakana Ajibade*  
*Ohan, Ohan ni ndun*  
*A ri Egba l'okankan, a se bi ologun ni*  
*Ija suke suke nija Egba*  
*Ija lile lile n'ija Oyo*  
(The crown of Ajibade  
"Ohan, Ohan" they cry:  
Egbas at a distance appear like men,  
No less and feeble are Egbas in Battle;  
Strong and brave are Oyos in fight.)
- (b) *Ijebu ko pe okowo*  
*Nitori eru l'a se nlo*  
(The Ijebus are not worth a cent (lit 20 cowries)  
Only for booty are we going.)<sup>5</sup>

The Ilorin were usually regarded by other Yoruba sub-ethnic groups as cunning and slippery even more so than the Oyo. This is illustrated by two sayings that

gained currency towards the end of the century. It is significant and it is a measure of the astuteness of the Ilorin that these sayings were coined by the Oyo who were themselves pastmasters in the art of inter-communal and inter-ethnic diplomacy.

- (a) *Ilorin*  
*Ilu ti n lo irin*  
*Abòntásé eniyan*  
 Ilorin  
 The city that grinds iron to powdery dust  
 Not to talk of human beings).
- (b) *Ilorin mesu Jamba*  
 (Ilorin man, controller of diabolical trickery).

The Oyo subgroup of Eruwa and the environs were reputed to be very fond of sexual activities. The Oyo subgroup of Iresa too were reputed to be sexually highly-strung. This aspect of their character made it difficult for their women to settle down into marriage with men. Because of this reputation a promiscuous Eruwa or Iresa person became stereotypes of her clan as indicated by these two oriki chants

- (a) *"Aiye-rohun-fe*  
*Arà Ogunmoso*  
*Mó kò mi m'Elerunwa*  
*Oko ni'gbeyin aiye.*  
 (Wife-to-all-the world,  
 Native of Ogunmoso:  
 Don't divorce me, heiress of Eruwa  
 A husband is your most everlasting treasure
- (b) *Ti ng ba nlo ile Iresa Bariola,*  
*Omo Oba dudu eti Ekorò.*  
*Arisogun Mode Iresa*  
*Oun meindinlogun ni o j'omò Oniresa maa*  
*gbe 'le oko.<sup>6</sup>*  
  
 (Now to turn to the house of Iresa Bariola  
 Offspring of the black king near Ekorò  
 Arisogun, Mode of Iresa  
 There are sixteen reasons why a princess  
 of Iresa cannot settle down with a husband.)

The rivalry and inter-ethnic animosity between the metropolitan Oyo and the Ijesa was extremely intense in the 19th century. The metropolitan Oyo cast the Ijesa into a stereotype - a moody, excessively stubborn and vile-tempered person with a mouth that oozed with obscenities. He was a man who was very hardened physically and could endure a lot of physical hardships. This was the rationale behind the offensive Oyo saying:

*Ijesa Omo Owaju ti Ife opo iya*  
 Ijesas 'children of Owaju, happy to endure  
 much sufferings'

The Ijesa in turn, were contemptuous of the physical appearance and the personality of the metropolitan Oyo person. Therefore, they cast the Oyo person into a stereotype: an ugly and unhealthy-looking person, who could not appear cheerful or likeable even on the way to his bride's house. So, the Ijesa would say:

*Oyo igunnugun,*  
*Oyo igunnugun,*  
*Oyo nlo 'le ana e,*  
*O we 'lawani enu tutu,*

(Oyo, the vulture-man;  
 Oyo the skeleton-man  
 The man who walks to his bride's house  
 With his lips in folds like a turban.)

Beside casting rival ethnic groups into stereotype moulds for the purpose of abuse, vilification and political or military subjugation, the Yoruba ethnic groups, during the last century, enlisted language for the purpose of self-praise and personal aggrandisement, and, to arrogate to specific groups good attributes that were presumed lacking among other ethnic groups. The most veritable sources of information on this activity are family lineage poems, the *orile*.<sup>8</sup> The Ife, for example, cherished their own types of facial marks but abhorred the Oyo variants of facial marks, hence they praised themselves in this manner:

*Abu olufe Akejiomo*  
*Bi mo ba tori onikéke ku.*  
*Ng o wi pe iku arewa lo p'ogo.*  
*B'i mo ba tori onisòbòró ku.*  
*Aa pe ku arewa l'o p'ogo.*  
*Emi o ni tori oniperense ku abila merindinlogun*  
*Oniperense abilalogido, erukeru abilalalenu*  
*Gambari onilaayagba.*

(Abu, the Ife ruler with two facial marks,  
 If I die for the love of the man with keke marks  
 It would be said that I was killed by my love  
 for a handsome man:  
 If I die for the love of the man with no facial  
 marks,  
 It would be said that I was killed by my love  
 for a handsome man;  
 I will not die for a man with sixteen *perense* marks.

Man with strange, and awkward facial marks,  
 Despicable slave with a scratched face,  
 Like an Hausaman with *Yagba* facial marks.)



The Ife have always argued that the *Ooni* of Ife was not only superior to the *Alaafin* of Oyo but that the *Ooni* was actually a father and benefactor of the *Alaafin*. That attitude was immortalised by the Ife *Oriki* chanter who declared:

*Ade re ò n'iyé*  
*Ade nlanla l'ade Oba*  
*Ade Oruru la gba f'Alaafin*  
*Oruru Om'Ajateyangiyangi*  
*Olufe Ooni.*  
*Eru jeje ni Gbogbo 'lekile*

(Your crowns are legion  
Big, big, crowns are the king's crowns  
It was Oruru's crown we gave to *Alaafin*  
Oruru, Offspring of *Ajateyangiyangi*  
*Ooni* king of Ife.  
The fear and terror of all the world.)

The war prowess of the *Olukoyi* sub-group of the Oyo ethnic stock was immortalised in these memorable lines of the *Olukoyi* lineage song:

*Ongbe nla Elegba Abijagun-ti-on-rere*  
*Abijagun-gbororo-ebi-ese-ole*

(Ongbenla Elegba, master of the far-flung battlefield  
Whose reach in battle is as long as a robber's leg.)

The legendary abilities of the *Ofa* people in wrestling matches is couched, in this extract, in a language that is unabashed, unapologetic, in favour of the penchant that the *Ofa* people have for this popular pastime.

*Ng o gbe 'ja le 'ju i-te-ngele.*  
*Onmoka, baba, mà gbe 'ja ru gegege bi Oya.*  
*A t'okunrin Ofa at'obinrin Ofa.*  
*Ni'le Onimoka o.*  
*Eyi ti o ba le ja l'o y'ole n 'le wa.*

(I shall let the whole world know that I yarn  
for wrestling combats.  
Great Onimoka, I carry wrestling on my head  
with ostentatious care.  
In the house of the Onimoka  
Whoever is not an expert wrestler either male or female is worse  
than useless.)

The *Owu* people were said to be tough and as hard as nails in their interaction with people of other sub-ethnic stocks. They cherished this reputation, entrenched in these lines of their lineage chant:

*Enia o d'Ehin Igbeti.*  
*K'o fe mó òle kù.*  
*B'o o b'omode won.*  
*W'o a ba 'gba won.*

(Whenever you arrive at Ehin Igbeti  
There is always a tough man around:  
If you don't find a tough young man  
There will be a tough old man.)

Though the metropolitan Oyo and the Ibadan are of the same Oyo sub-ethnic stock, the metropolitan Oyo and the Ibadan Oyo for most of the 19th century had a cat-and-mouse relationship. This was understandable. The metropolitan Oyo needed the Ibadan to sustain what remained of the old Oyo kingdom. So, they tolerated the Ibadan with a disdain and impatience that was often undisguised. The Ibadan on the other hand needed the metropolitan Oyo's seal of authority to legitimise their military victories and conquests and for the purpose of maintaining some semblance of peace and cohesion among the sprawling war camp that was Ibadan city and the many lawless warlords inhabiting it. As the century wore on the Ibadan craved to have the chieftaincy titles that existed in metropolitan Oyo. This led Ibadan to have, sometime towards the end of the 19th century, an *Olokunesin*, the title of one of the Oyo chiefs usually expected to die whenever an *Alaafin* died. The metropolitan Oyo were scornful about this development as shown in these lines from the *Olokunesin* lineage chant:

*Olokunesin Ibadan*  
*K'o ma ba Olokunesin Oyo je*  
*Eni o ba r'oju o'oba ku*  
*L'aa maa mo l'Olokunesin*  
*Eyi ti o roju b'oba ku*  
*A a maa pe 'on l'Olokuneran ni.*

(The *Olokunesin* of Ibadan,  
Should not denigrate the *Olokunesin* of Oyo.  
He who is courageous enough to die with the king  
Is to be regarded as the true *Olokunesin*.  
The *Olokunesin* who does not die with the king  
Is not fit to hold the title.)

Long before the advent of the British, the kingdoms and fiefdoms of Yorubaland had formed and perfected enviable diplomatic codes. Languages, with its nuances, fragrances and colours, was the bedrock of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic diplomatic communication. Maybe, the most famous illustrations of this state of affairs are the names of the *Ilaris* in the palace of the *Alaafin* of Oyo. It was a classic example of how the meaning-content of names and titles could be used to encode royal diplomatic intents and purposes. Samuel Johnson has taken due notice of this phenomenon when he says of the *Ilaris*:

*Their names generally signify some attributes of the King, or are significant of his purpose, intention or will, or else the preservation of his life, e.g. Oba l'olu, the King is supreme; Oba-ko-se-tan, the King is not ready; S'aiye ro, the upholder of the world (i.e. the Kingdom) Oba gb'ori, the King the overoomer; Madarikan, do not oppose him.*

Names and titles of eminent persons often reflected inter-ethnic rivalries. The great Ibadan general, Ajayi Ogboriefon's nickname, Ogboriefon was not bequeathed to him at birth. He was said to have got the name as a consequence of beheading an Efon warrior in Ekiti country. Literally translated Ogboriefon means "a carrier of the Efon's head." It is easy to imagine the consternation that the name would bestir in every patriotic Efon man each time it was mentioned.

It would appear that the Yoruba have always placed a high premium on the power of the spoken word. All the sub-ethnic groups have faith in this saying:

*"Owe ni esin oro, bi oro ba sonu  
owe ni a fii wa"*

(Proverbs are the search horses of thought,  
when ideas seem lost proverbs are what to  
use to search for them.)

The Oyo's belief in the power of the spoken word seems even greater than that of other Yoruba sub-groups hence their saying "*ejo l'aa ko, a kii ko ija*" - (It is wiser to learn how to state your case than to learn how to fight for it.)

Certainly in the 19th century, the Yoruba language was effectively used to reflect the social and political ambitions and perceptions of the period. In the same way language can and should continue to be used effectively for the peace and unity which the Kiriji Treaty intended. To continue to repeat 19th century prejudices will negatively portray the post Kiriji generation of Yoruba people as uncreative.

## Notes and References

1. Johnson, Rev. Samuel: *The History of the Yorubas* (C.M.S., Lagos, 1921), pp.15-25.
2. A flute-like musical instrument used by the Oyo - Yoruba to send messages to fairly distant places.
3. There is a geographical explanation for not having firewood to cook yams in Oyo. Old Oyo was located in the sahel north-western part of Yorubaland where a few trees grew.
4. The exploding mortars and muskets landing within the walls of Oyo sounded to the terrified inhabitants /PE/ PE/ PE/ PE/ hence they name the war / alupepe/ war.
5. Johnson, Samuel: *The History of the Yorubas*, p.342-356.
6. Eleruwa lineage chant by Madam Jejeola Ejide of Eruwa.
7. Babalola, Adeboye: *Awon Oriki Orile* (Collins, 1973), p.129.
8. Babalola, Adeboye: *op.cit.*, p.15 passim.
9. Johnson, Samuel: *op.cit.* p.61.





## **Chapter Thirty Nine**

# **Chants and Songs in the Service of War: Ijesa Example**

**T. M. Ilesanmi**

### **Introduction**

Chants and songs are two of the five major aspects of music, the other aspects being recitation, instrumentation and choreography. In appealing to human emotions, music has preserved the unwritten records of the non-literate age in forms of festivals, rituals and many other socio-linguistic interactions. Even at the alphabetic age, many records are kept in poetic musical forms whose origins are undoubtedly oral and musical. Chants and songs cannot be treated in isolation of instrumentation and choreography, but literature is more interested in the verbal expression than in the instrumentation and choreographic messages. Oral literature can hardly be dissociated from music. In fact, the study of oral literature is the study of oral music be it recited, chanted or sung. Both the words and the tones are significant in traditional Yoruba music. Among the Yoruba, the instrumental, as well as the vocal music are expected to convey a message to the audience, a message whose full appreciation can only be realised when the semantic import of the verbal message and the tone signature of the instrumentation are fully comprehended. Thus the audience reacts not only to the melody but also to the message conveyed by the musical artist who at the same time performs the role of an oral literary artist. The thrust in this paper is the function which the Ijesa vocal music (especially chants and songs) performs in the atmosphere of war and its re-enactment.

### **Background to the War Music**

The Ijesa have many things in common with all other dialect groups of Yorubaland through interdialectal interactions. Consequently, their music cannot be divested of the influences of these other dialect groups. The community existed and can only continue to exist in relation to other Yoruba dialect groups who together form the 'Nation' that is today known as, and called the Yoruba. Peace and war in Yorubaland are their concern since they are, as each of the other dialect groups, factors to be

reckoned with in the political history of Yorubaland.

Many reasons led the Ijesa to take part in the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War. These reasons can be divided into two major categories. These dual causes may even be considered as actions and reactions concerning certain environmental situations. Offence is bound to create a concomitant reaction of defence; exploitation makes the exploited rise in arms for independence; corrupted power often faces the reaction of revolution. Thus, man at every age in different places often face the task of preserving peace through war.

The Ijesas regard the Ekitiparapo alliance as a defensive alliance to break the yoke of the Ibadan (Oyo).<sup>1</sup> But the Ibadan felt they had already created an hegemonous tradition over the eastern Yoruba; consequently, the Ibadan felt Fabunmi was offensive in beheading their representative at Oke-Imesi and sending messages to the Ijesa and the Ekiti towns to spur them to action, to end Ibadan oppression. But the Fulani had already sacked the Oyo from Oyo-Ile and drove them towards the forest region.<sup>2</sup> Might was right and weakness was servitude.

Leadership in Yorubaland has often been based on *Orisa* paternity.<sup>3</sup> The advent of Oduduwa which brought the current traditional political era, seems to have covered up prior political situation. But it is now historically evident that the sons of Oduduwa did not settle on originally uninhabited land;<sup>4</sup> they either sacked the aborigines or subjected them to the new political hegemony, while diplomatically living in harmony with them and controlling with some of the original leaders the political affair of the land.

On land depends all human livelihood. Previous rulers settled on the land and provided themselves with forest products through the sweat of their brow. But the Ibadan regarded themselves as colonisers who only needed to put governors at the vassal posts to collect annual produce which was subsequently transported to the Lords at Ibadan after the governors had fed themselves fat. This was the servitude rejected by the Ekitiparapo alliance initiated by Fabunmi of Oke-Imesi.

The milder servitude of settler rulers who adapted themselves to the aborigines situation by creating an all embracing tradition was more tolerable and gave no room for revolution. But this too was exploitative without the enslavement that dehumanises the exploited. Might has always been right when diplomatically exercised; but when power corrupts absolutely, human endurance is drawn to the end of its elasticity and the desire for liberty sacrifices peace at the altar of war or genocide. Very often man rejects the obnoxious philosophy of equating might with right.

This is the perennial situation that has continued to rear its head since the time of *Orunmila*, *Ogun*, *Obatala* and *Olofin* before the occupation of the land by Oduduwa and his followers. Political style changes from era to era with new external contact and wider environmental experiences which could be reflected and built upon by subsequent rulers. In various forms, these politico-philosophical experiences were recorded in artistic recitations, chants and songs.

## **The Artist the Audience and the Situation**

War songs were not limited to the war fields though they originated in war atmosphere.

They were extended to rituals, festivals and to other social activities. The current practitioners of the songs were not born during the Kiriji War, however, some of them got firsthand information about the war from the eye witnesses who had long died. Songs may not preserve the details of a past event. They however record the key points, skeleton allusions which can be en fleshed by the culturally minded audience.

The original chanters, drummers and singers known as the *Ipaye* actually followed the warriors to the war camps and followed them to the battle fields only to withdraw before the battles started. Theirs was a panegyric act spurring warriors to heroic actions. They told the warriors about the ignominious calamity of being captured as slaves, of condemnation to perpetual servitude, of all manners of dehumanisation and of the obliteration of the glories of their families. They also recalled the positive gains that the victors would aim at: military honours, additional cognomen, abundant booty, choicest slaves both male and female, and above all freedom from external molestations.

The *Ipaye* entertained the warriors in the camp at night to make them forget the social activities of peaceful atmosphere at home. In the morning they called them to heroic actions showing them in verbal artistry the dignity of being victorious and the humiliation of being pusillanimous. With the panegyric messages of the *Ipaye*, the warriors took up their arms and faced the day's military task with unbending audacity.

After the war, the artists re-enacted the war events and adapted their performances to suit the needs and the mentalities of their various audiences. This is so because of the political implication of their verbal messages. For example, their performance at the annual *iwude* festival at Ilesa meticulously follows the ritual event which they re-enact and they dare not change any specific aspect of the ritual without incurring cultural alienation. At social gatherings, the artists tailor their verbal utterances to suit the cultural ego of their audience. Thus, what they present to the typical Ijesa audience is different from what they exhibit to a dialectally mixed audience. Inter-ethnic harmony demands that they play down on war or hatred laden statements in a mixed audience. The spirit of unity among the Yoruba of all dialect shades seems to be the focus of every artist today. Nevertheless, history can preserve the past in its purity to serve as a warning to every subsequent generation for avoiding future quarrels.

It is expedient to adopt the phenomenological approach of presenting the verbal message *in situ* so that we can thoroughly comprehend the feeling and the reasons for the verbal expressions at every situation. Thus the interpretation here would not be subjective but true to the spirit of the artists at their specific performance, or at the time of the composition of the music.

## **The Records of Thoughts and Deeds**

The first function of music in the service of war is the chanting of the praise poetry of the war heroes. The chanting of the praises of the heroes serve as the creation of 'bigmanship' for people who have excelled others on the battle field. The honour accorded to heroic warriors is not based on their birth nor on the deeds of their ancestors; the heroes achieved their own greatness while the artist advertises the

greatness to the populace so he may be emulated by them. Here, it is very often possible for an individual of very low birth to distinguish himself militarily and thus inaugurate a new era of social recognition. The panegyrics can even push him to higher military pedestal.

The Ijesa previously looked down on the Oyo, but Oyo offensive became a matter of great concern to the Ijesa. As the excerpt below shows, the Oyo seemed to be the only enemies the Ijesa had:

*In an Oyo an an wo tiiri  
 An an wo tiiri  
 Me miya k'Oyo ya a si ...  
 In wo an Oyo kan an wo yoyo  
 An wo yoyo o bo lodo mi  
 An wo yoyo o bo ledi mi  
 Mo ku Ojo  
 Mo k'Uya ! Mo kuuya !  
 Ka ri ... Mo mon a be !  
 Gbia ! agada !  
 O o o o o o o o o o  
 E e e e e e e e e e  
 Ukoko ko ba ti fo  
 Ke e mon papaakudi loun da  
 Oni ogun ba ti mi  
 Mon peru loun  
 Kori ba ti dun gbi lale  
 Se ni an be e!*

The Oyo are approaching in great number  
 They are approaching in hundreds  
 I don't know where the Oyo are heading  
 towards  
 Behold the Oyo gliding approachingly  
 Sliding approachingly towards me  
 What a lucky person I am  
 I am fortunate, I am blessed  
 Where ... I will decapitate them !  
 Gbia ! Ah ! Ah ! sword !  
 O o o o o o o o o o !  
 E e e e e e e e e e !  
 A pot that is broken  
 Knows, for sure, it becomes a potsherd  
 Anyone captured in battle  
 Knows for certain he becomes a slave  
 Once the head drops to the ground  
 It is undoubtedly beheaded.

Even though the Ijesa and the Oyo are no longer at war, the antagonistic reference to the Oyo continues in this genre since the Oyo were the last traditional enemies the Ijesa claim they had before the British got involved in the affairs of Yorubaland.

The description of the movement of the Oyo as "gliding" and "sliding" is more in





For one's own slave  
 To take a cane and flog one  
 The mushroom that grows in a bachelor's  
     farm grows for nothing  
 If he plucks it and takes it home  
 Who will prepare soup with it for him?  
 Chorus: Owners of two, let owners of two hundred rest  
 I will behead  
 I will behead  
 I will certainly behead him!  
 Oke Imesi, I will behead him!  
 Obalufonyede, I will behead him!  
 Okurokefon, I will behead him!  
 I will certainly behead him!

The Ijesa were dissatisfied with the manner the British Government put an end to the Ekitiparapo War because they believed they were gaining an upper hand over the Oyo. The artist makes us believe that the whiteman favoured the Oyo by according them a position of authority which the Ekitiparapo felt was not due to the Oyo. By their act, the British are believed to have made the slave superior to his master. The imagery of the bachelor and the mushroom reveals the feeling of the Ijesa that the attribution of some authority to the Oyo was a futile exercise since the Ijesa felt that the Oyo would not know how to use the authority. Probably this authority refers to the Ijesa towns of Ada, Otan and Igbajo which were brought under Ibadan after the settlement.<sup>5</sup> It may also refer to other political issues at the material time. The song ends on a note of desperation to behead the enemy. This desperation is again echoed in the following excerpt:

*Ologun to soke*  
*O ti saworo bomi*  
*An kelegbe ke e mo tejuju bomi*  
*Elegbo seninu ara re*  
*O tejiju bomi*  
*Abi ki mi mititiri a beni a nu*  
*Bi oni begede?*  
*A dugbo alausa*  
*Kan a sa ni in.*  
*Ki an dugbo lobi*  
*Kan bi yeeyee seyin*  
*Ugbi ka a dugbo alakoko*  
*Uja oni a ko*  
*Patapira ni oruko igi maa to goke*  
*Ogunranyinranyin*  
*Ni oruko akeke igbi oure ...*

The General jumps up  
 And soaks the staff of office in water  
 One who has a sore is told to avoid  
     putting the sore in water  
 He pitied himself

He soaks his sore in water  
Should I make a move to decapitate people  
Like one cutting down the plantain trunk?  
We are now in the jungle  
Let the enemy run  
If they reach the kolanut tree plantation  
Let them move backwards  
When they get to akoko forest (Newbouldia Laevis)  
We shall meet force with force.  
Patapira is the tree I will climb.  
Ogunranyinranyin.  
Is the original name of the spinning wheel ...

This excerpt contains some incantatory mandate stipulating that the war situation follows the phonological sound of the names of the plants mentioned. /Sa/ in awusa is interpreted to mean 'run'; /bi/ in Obi is said to mean 'move backward' while /ko/ in 'akoko' gives the impression of 'meeting in combat.' These cannot be rendered appropriately in translation. It is assumed that the Oyo do not understand the tactics of forest battle as they are only familiar with the grassland, hence the artist is very confident of success in 'igbo alausa,' 'igbo olobi' and 'igbo alakoko' - areas which are typically found in the forest regions. 'Patapira' tree refers to a situation of extreme desperation whereby two opposing fighters have to fight to a finish. The combat is compared to the whirling of the spinning wheel.<sup>6</sup>

But before people get to this point, they are spurred to action by some instigating songs which place a lot of value on heroism which can better materialise in the battle-field.

*Maa yun o o o o o o o*  
*Ogun laare e o loogun*  
*Maa yun o o o o o*  
*Maa bo o o o o o*  
*Ori i mi mon ra san o*  
*Omo Amutijekunbo*  
*Maa yun o o o o o o*  
*Maa bo o o o o*  
*Maa keru,*  
*Maa kola ni temi*  
*Se in a yun o loogun?*  
*Da mi lohun*  
*Nitori o da birida birida*  
*Udi aparo*  
*Lemese an we luwemuwa*  
*Ko dede doju ara re dele piriipi,*

I will go (to battle)  
We are proceeding to the war front, soldiers  
I will go (to battle)  
I will return safely  
I will not face the misfortune  
Of not capturing some slaves

I will go to battle  
 I will return safely  
 I will capture slaves  
 I will share booty  
 Would you go to battle, soldiers?  
 Answer me quick  
 Because it looks like the awkward fight  
 The awkward fight of the bush fowl  
 A servant who is washed and decorated  
 Turns round and messes himself in the mud

The group leader sets the example. He takes a decision to proceed to the battle front with the positive conviction that he would capture some slaves and bring a lot of boot home. He then throws a challenge to other members and asks them for an immediate reply. At the same time he compares the pusillanimous member to a honoured servant who publicly disgraces himself by performing actions unworthy of the honour accorded him.

A direct appeal follows to all the members to be bold and fearless.

*Aya gbogbo i so kulukolo (Egbe)*  
*Mo sojo*  
*Mo mon sa a*  
*Mo sojo*  
*Erinmakinde*  
*Mo sojo*  
*Ofinran*  
*Mo maa sojo*

Every heart beats heavily (chorus)  
 Don't be timid  
 Don't run away  
 Don't be timid  
 Erinmakinde  
 Don't be timid  
 Ofinran  
 Don't ever be timid.

As the leader encourages his followers to be courageous, he calls them one after the other instilling boldness into them as he condemns cowardice

But the leader also needs the support of his followers; he must be assured of their love and support before he marches to the battle. He cannot force people against their will since victory in war is a collective affair. He wants to know the opinions of others:

Question: *Ira ibee se bee ni?*

Answer: *E ee bee ni*

Question: *Abere i kose aso*

*Atelese i korin ase*  
*In ro pe iraye ra rogun ni a?*  
*Ogun ya, Ogun ya!*  
*Maa pa, maa mu!*



*Uwo rian siko, Loogun?*  
*Se bee ni a?*  
*Iyan alase meeji*  
*Iyan alase meji ni a jo a je.*  
*A a a a a !*  
*E ja a a a ?*  
*Se in ti mura tan?*  
*Se bee ni?*  
*Atelese i korin ose*  
*Ekiti Udi i ko?*  
*O gbeyin sinu oko*  
*E mu un kookan bo libe*  
*Aere oko o moole.*

Question: Dear People, is your reply "Yes" ?  
Reply: Oh Yes !  
Question: The needle does not refuse to sew a cloth.  
Do you think there would never be war?  
Let us go to war ! Let us go to war !  
I will kill, I will capture !  
What about you, Loogun?  
Yes or No?  
Collective pounded yam  
We shall altogether eat pounded yam  
Ah ah ah ah ah !  
Shall we move?  
Are you all ready?  
Yes or No?  
Yes or No?  
The feet do not refuse to walk  
What about the buttocks  
It is the last to return from farm  
But brings nothing from there.  
The hut in the farm does not capture  
thieves.

Some parts of this song are also incantatory; in fact, incantation is a weapon of war - a verbal weapon that has psychological effect on the soldiers. However, the keynote of the song is the affirmation in the response to the leader's questions. Without this affirmation, no war can be fought and the entire community may be subjected to slavery.

When everybody has given his consent, the people sing out in joy in praise of *Ogun*, the god of iron. The tribute to *Ogun* is essential since any act that involves the shedding of blood through the use of iron is regarded as the handiwork of *Ogun*. He is normally propitiated before people march to battle. The entire army may even be regarded as *Ogun*'s people as shown in the song below:

*Ero Ogun yeve, o ye ye ye*  
*Ero Ogun yeve o.*  
*Aja Ogun eje*

*Ogun poko sumona*  
*O paya si madiro*  
*O polonu gogoogo seti omi*  
*Duja akan oun eja.*

Subjects of *Ogun* are many, they are numerous  
 Subjects of *Ogun* are many  
 Seven dogs should be sacrificed to *Ogun*  
*Ogun* kills the husband in the kitchen  
 And beheads the wife at the fireplace  
 And decapitates the heavy breasted woman at the stream  
 Creating quarrels for the crab and the fish.

The act of killing is not attributed to man but to the deity so that no man is held accountable for any immoral or evil action. The people seem to regard the acts of the deity as amoral; but this is only done to exonerate man. If the deity protects and aids his subjects against the attacks of the enemies, such aid and protection are treated as good and moral - as favour granted by a powerful deity.

It is such calamitous allusion to the deeds of *Ogun* that makes the artists declare that war is morally bad:

*Ogun de o*  
*Asoro - sika*  
*Babaa Gbomuso*  
*Ogun mo de lonii*  
*Ogun de o*  
*Asorosika*

War has come  
 The wicked, the heartless  
 The father of Gbomuso  
 War has come today  
 War has come  
 The wicked, the heartless

Here war is personified. His arrival is promptly announced to everyone. Once war is thus announced, all normal activities are suspended.

No one demands the justification for war once it has been declared:

*Ogun labere o*  
*Ogun labere*  
*Oye ye*  
*Ogun labere*

War does not need any justification  
 War does not need any justification  
 Let this be fully understood  
 War does not need any justification.

This song may be interpreted to mean that war is amoral. Acts perpetrated in war time cannot be questioned. Although this stand does not augur well for progress,

people sometimes resort to war as a last resort in order to be able to enjoy their free existence probably won on the battle field. Power, is the only passport to right.

*Oriki* (praise poetry) is another feature in *Orin Ogun*. It appeals to the ego of individuals and of the community as a whole. It is in *Oriki* that we see the core of the values of individuals and of each group. As people excel their neighbours in the display of valour on the battle-field, artists take note of the performance of each person and present this to the entire community at home after the battle has ended. It is the artist who popularises the heroes through characterisation in poems or songs. The poetic language of *oriki* is more arresting than that of ordinary narration. For example, in very few words the artist describes the deeds of the generalissimo at the battle front thus:

*Loogun pa sotun-un*  
*O botun je*  
*Loogun pa sosi*  
*O bosi je*  
*O polomu gogoogo seti omi*  
*Duju akan oun eja.*

The General kills to the right  
 He demolishes to the right  
 The General kills to the left  
 He destroys to the left  
 He decapitates the heavy breasted  
 woman at the streams  
 Creating quarrels for the crab and the fish.

In just six lines the artist has effectively dealt with all the exploits of the General.

In a chain of praises the artist may make brisk references to many people, and accord everyone a word or two of *oriki* to spur him to action as shown below:

*Ia lomo Are l'jekun*  
*Pele omo erin adigun-bo*  
*Kabiyesi ni maa moni un*  
*Omo uku rara Odio*  
*Omo uku pani i le*  
*An mebe subonu re*  
*Oko o rolori i na*  
*Se ni an a be*  
*Oponri olori mo yagan*  
*Kule Oba mo ba a sofo*  
*O dari l'Ogotun*  
*Morio l'Owena*  
*Inle 'mon Oloni asarebumu*  
*Omo Oba Odo*  
*Ajaoro nikun*  
*Lesu Okun eketa omo*  
*Lebeedo modere*  
*Abakodi jija*  
*Makinde mee ki o*

*Awelewa ni baba re*  
*Saolu Okin limole*  
*Gbusulaja obinrin gunyan je.*  
*Loogun baaji*  
*Roopeyin*

We are the offsprings of Are at ijekun  
 Greetings to you offsprings of the  
     mighty elephant  
 I will devote this entire day to the *Oba*  
 Who has the right of life and death  
 Offspring of the death that kills  
 And still demands praises from the bereaved.  
 The penis that stands erect at the sight of the  
     *Oba's* wife  
 Should be cut off  
 Oh wife of the *Oba*, you dare not become barren  
 Or else the *Oba's* palace may be empty.  
 He returns from Ogotun  
 Looks glorious at Owena  
 Greetings! Offspring of *Oni* stream in high demand.  
 Progenitor of *Oba* Odo  
 Made a priest at Ikun  
 Lesa Okun, the third in the family.  
 Lebeedo Modere, how are you?  
 The owner of the much frequented house  
 Greetings to you, Makinde,  
 Your father is slim and handsome  
 Saolu the king of birds.  
 Greetings to Gbusulaja.  
 Greetings to Loogun Baaji  
 And to you, Roopeyin, greetings.

The artist first pays tribute to the community collectively and then proceeds to honour individuals starting from the *Oba*. He then diverts his attention to the *Oba's* wife, then to the very important families and finally to the praise of individuals. In some cases he merely mentions the cognomens of individuals; this is sufficient to give them the moral courage they need. However, if a special festivity is organised by any of the members, the particular member is accorded the greatest poetic honour, for then his *oriki* is sung in full, while others are merely referred to in cognomens.

Very important for the success of war are many songs which the traditional soldiers sing to spur men in the battle-field. The songs are relatively short, not more than four lines in length, but they are often repeated several times. Some of them are meaningful, conveying messages that can aid the morale of the fighters; others are mere sounds rendered to facilitate the rhythm of procession. Sometimes folktale songs are used by every citizen and they become familiar from childhood. Below are examples of the various types:



*Aro re*  
*Arogun yo*  
*Ye so o gbodo foo kan 'mo Ipetu.*

These are Aro  
Who rejoice at war  
Who would dare to touch citizens of Ipetu.

The Ipetu-Ijesa people are called Aro. They feel proud about their past war exploits and they are convinced too that other ethnic groups respect them for their military valour and avoid getting involved in any dispute with them. It is always with pride that they sing this song. Each locality in Ijesaland adapts this song to itself.

Sometimes, some songs are rendered to facilitate work:

*Iwo, iwo iwo*  
*Oliwokiriwo de o*  
*Iwokiriwo*  
*Oliwokiriwo de o*

This song has some onomatopoeic significance based on the syllable 'wo' which sounds heavy and gives the impression of destruction. As they sing the song the soldiers move on pressing their feet heavily on the ground as if they are trampling over their vanquished enemies. Such a song often accompanies collective work both in war and in peace times.

Some folktale songs have appropriate message for soldiers:

*Ero oja, Ero oja*  
*Ale mi deyin,*  
*O ku kekere o*  
*Ero oja ale mi deyin.*

Market woman, market woman  
My concubine, return to your home  
Just a little more to go  
Market woman, my concubine, return  
to your home.

This song is based on a folktale which narrates the misfortune of a very beautiful woman who falls in love with a strange man on a market day. Their love affair continues for several market days until one day the woman decides to go home with the man. The man is reluctant but the woman insists on following him. On the way, the man tries to persuade the woman to go back home, making her realise that he has come from a mysterious town. The woman will not yield to his persuasion. Finally, in a very thick forest, the man changes to a lion and devours the woman.

This song is allusive, but its significance within the martial genre needs considering. The warriors use the song to dissuade any of their female friends from following them to the battle front, or from having some unnecessary sentimental influence on them. Desires for women and battle are incompatible; pleasure would only come after victory.

There are some other situational songs worthy of mention. When the soldiers are

fortunate to ambush their enemies; they burst into songs of intimidation to demoralize the enemies. The excerpt below is expressed in the apt imagery of a captured Ogbigbo bird:

*A kagbigbo mori igi  
Ogbigbo o o o  
Aa wobi eye ti a fo  
Ogbigbo o o o*

The Ogbigbo bird is trapped on a tree  
Ogbigbo  
Let us see how the bird can escape  
*Ogbigbo.*

As the enemies hear this song, they panic and surrender themselves to their captors as slaves. Any of them who resists the milder treatment due to a slave is immediately put to death.

The slave has no right to express his own opinion; all that is expected of him is to submit to the orders of his master.

*In maa se un un un sa  
Eru i jiyen oran  
Eru o jiyen oran  
O dade loko Ode  
In maa se un un un sa  
Eru i jiyen oran*

Just continue to say un un un ...  
A slave has no right to object  
Any slave who objects  
Will die openly  
Just continue to say un un un ...  
A slave has no right to object.

Generally speaking the Yoruba were not very harsh in their treatment of slaves; they fed them well and sometimes allowed them to have free access to many things in the homes of their masters. However, we cannot avoid some isolated situations where slaves were wickedly treated. The slave cannot sing his *oriki* which is the expression of human dignity. He has no fame to parade in public, hence some fighters would rather die on the battle-field than submit themselves to the ignominious life of a slave. This preference is expressed in the song below:

*Upaye Ara o o  
Ogun gbona Oan o  
Upaye Ara,  
Ogun gbona Oan  
Kogun ba gbona Oan o  
E mo ye gbona orun o  
Upaye Ara,  
Ogun gbona Oan*

Upaye of Ara (Aramoko)  
War has blocked the way to Oan  
Upaye of Ara (Aramoko)  
War has blocked the way to Oan  
But if war has blocked the way to Oan  
It certainly cannot block the way to death.  
Upaye of Ara (Aramoko)  
War has blocked the way to Oan.

With these songs, the warriors are advised to fight their way through to victory or to death; they should not allow themselves to be enslaved.

## Conclusion

Now that there are no wars, the martial genre still has some significance for the Ijesa. The genre has moulded the community socially, psychologically, and militarily. The people are prepared for all eventuality, be it political, social, military or even religious.

We need to note here that there was hardly any ethnic group in Yorubaland which did not take part in the various wars of the 19th century. And every group that took part had its own war music and songs which accompanied the war events. The war songs did not have the same social effect on all the groups. If a traditional community takes the songs seriously and perpetuates them, the lives of its members would certainly be more socially influenced by them as long as they are reminded, through the songs, of certain events that appeal to their communal ego.

The regular performance of *Orin Ogun* psychologically strengthens the Ijesa to be fearless, energetic, daring, and ethnically conscious. *Orin Ogun* can partly be described as the song of the warlike people.

## Notes and References

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*Ko si ' lu t'o le da ho Ibadan*  
*Asa niwon, nwon ju eyekeiye Se bi asa ba ke ninu igbo*  
*Keke a pa mo eiye l'enu*  
*Bi kiniun ba bu ramuramu ni tju*  
*Ti ramuramu re gba igbo*  
*Awon eranko a pa lolo*  
*Bee ni Ibadan ri ni ile Yoruba*  
*Awon ni oko Ekiti*  
*Awon ni oko Ekiti*  
*Awon ke ni oko Akoko*  
*Ekun Ijesa, Ekun Egba*  
*Esu l'ehin awon Ijebu*  
*Beti Ibadan nje ni ojo wonni.*

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## Chapter Forty

# History and the Dramatist: The Example of Wale Ogunyemi's *Kiriji*

Tejumola Olaniyan

History, literature and art have their sources in the social life of man - the totality of how man produces and reproduces himself. The selection of materials of literature and art from the vast expanse of history is a significant process involving the artist 'digesting' his historical reality, processing this through his faculties and interpreting same in concrete artistic images. Mao articulates well this creative process.

Works of art, as ideological forms, are products of the reflection in the human brain of the life of a given society.<sup>1</sup>

When Aristotle made his famous distinctions between the historian and the poet - that the one describes what has happened and the other what may happen - he was talking in part of history and poetry as a mode of grasping reality. His conclusion that poetry is "a more philosophical and higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular"<sup>2</sup> is another way of saying that philosophical history, be it in the form of drama or narrative prose, is more philosophical than chronicle history.<sup>3</sup>

If the totality of man's historical reality is the source of all literature and art, why are some of these expressly labelled 'historical' novel, 'historical' drama to the exclusion of the others? It is a telling comment on the neatness of this distinction that most often we encounter works which in their approximation of particular reality in depth and profundity, are no less 'historical' than those so designated. George Lukacs notices this immense paradox in the works of Shakespeare - between the playwright's 'histories' and the great tragedies like *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, etc.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the distinction remains useful in distinguishing works based on actual historical events, and the outrightly fictional. Wale Ogunyemi's *Kiriji*,<sup>5</sup> which we shall be discussing in detail later on, belongs to the former category.

But a historical drama is not - simply because it deals with particular historical actuality - a mirror copy of historical data. Mere empirical observation of historical

plays will reveal departures, ranging from the minor to the significant, from the actual historical details. Perhaps then, we may see historical drama as "a fiction based on actual facts and rendered in dramatic form." The very term "historical drama" suggests this interpretation: the first word qualifies the fictiveness of the second while the second questions the reality of the first.<sup>6</sup>

The reality of historical drama as a "mixture" of fact and fiction leads us to that contentious issue: historical veracity versus poetic licence. To what extent does the historical play approximate its sources? In the presence of any departure at all, does the play still qualify as "historical"? Neither Moremi of the larger background, nor the police woman of the immediate Agbekoya story cast her lot like Titubi with those she is sent to help vanquish (Osofisan's *Morountodun*). The real Elesin Oba neither married on the eve of his expected ritual death nor committed suicide later on (Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*). Considering similar 'lies' in Shaw's *St. Joan* and Brecht's *Galileo*, Bric Bentley could not but wonder: "If what playwrights are after is fiction, why do they purport to offer us history plays at all?"

The fact, however, is that historical drama is first and foremost a work of art, and this has its own laws and internal code of references different from historiography's. The playwright, in his foraging for material for his art, is not bound by the sanctity of historical data. "For the historian," as Osofisan once elaborated, "the journey backwards in time is its own fetish" while "for the playwright, it is a camouflage for bringing the contemporaneous into a decisive clash ... an aspect of the present, illuminating, cancelling out."<sup>8</sup>

The paradox Bentley discerned in Brecht's and Shaw's act of historical alteration in *Galileo* and *St. Joan* has some general applicability with the work of the conscious playwright:

The historical truth, rejected for its implausibility, has the air of an artifact, whereas the actual artifacts, the play, has an air of truth.... The question is whether the factual distortions can be accepted at face value. It seems to me that even for spectators who know that a history play is bad history, such a play might still seem to have some sort of special relevancy, a more urgent truth.<sup>9</sup>

But whether he distorts it or not, why the playwright's fascination with the events of history? Why serve the audience an aged dish when their taste buds glut with the steaming, spicy varieties of the moment? This brings into focus the question of the relevance of a historical drama to the playwright's own period. The playwright talks about the past mainly as a way of talking about the present. He sheds new light on the past and illuminates his own time in the process. The truth arrived at, though in the costume of a distant past, is actually of the moment.

The connection between the represented past and the author's time is more immediately visible in historical plays dealing with such timeless issues as power and politics. About his *Kiriji*, Ogunyemi reveals:

...no victor, no vanquished. They all got tired of the war and I saw it, you know, all that happened then, so many things that we still have now, that are still happening in this modern time and seized upon that to put some words in the mouth of some of the actors, and it went very well.<sup>10</sup>

Where the connection is not immediately obvious, the playwright 'fabricates.' The enduring point is that all great historical plays "are at least as such comment on the playwright's own times as on the periods about which they are ostensibly written."<sup>11</sup>

In his selection, arrangement and use of the materials of history, the playwright interprets history, he puts forward a view of history with which he persuades us to identify and accept. This is encapsulated in the variety of significant images that makes the totality of the artistic work - the play. More or less explicit in these images is the author's attitude to the larger issues of his time: his understanding of the historical process, his hopes, fears, aspirations and sympathies, in short, his *Weltanschauung* - all of which reflects his concrete situation in the social relations of his time. Armed with this valuable information we are well on the way to discovering the *correctness or otherwise* of the author's world outlook in the context of man's continuing historic search for a *truly* humane existence, for what other *necessary* end of interpreting history is there than to change it for the better? But then a crucial and contentious issue: what constitutes, in the light of our time *the* correct attitude *the* relevant methodology in the playwright's all-important business of interpreting history?

The idea of man as one of the variables of the environment, the environment as one of the variables of man - which means the dissolution of the environment into relationships between men - corresponds to a new way of thinking, the historical way ... The historicising theatre ... concentrates entirely on whatever in this everyday event is peculiar, particular, and demanding inquiry.

Bertolt Brecht<sup>12</sup>

There is no 'history' outside the struggles of man for existence, struggles of which 'the production of material life itself' is the *sine qua non*, the first historical act. The conscious historical dramatist understands that human actions, behaviours and ideas with which his art is concerned have no existence independent of the social life of man, a condition influenced as much by the present actions of men as by the structures inherited from the past. If he performs his major task of *always* historicising appearance - very well, he will discover not only the necessarily determining and retroactive relative relationship between men's consciousness and their material existence but also the dominance of the former as that of the group that controls the means of producing the latter. The playwright, in his probings, soon realises that he has been deceived by the textbooks into believing that history is but a dull wasteland enlivened only sporadically by some lone, colossal eponymous individuals; he asks thenceforth: what of those teeming others who directly engage in actual production, and thus the real makers of history? He then sharpens his perspective on the truth of man's ability, and indeed, tendency, to always seek to alter unfavourable conditions; transforming himself in the process.

What we are saying is that the conscious playwright, by understanding its laws, penetrates deep into the course of history, understands and reveals the historical meaning of phenomena and their links with the past, present and the future.<sup>13</sup> He sees it as his historical duty to take sides with those who push history forward - those who produce - and disturb, through and with his art, all fake equilibria and contrived

peace between these heroes and the unproductive consumers who appropriate. It is only with this approach that "History no longer scares the artist with its mystery, its tragedy, its puzzling facts, events and human destinies."<sup>14</sup>

*Kiriji* was performed in 1971 as a University of Ibadan presentation at the All-Nigeria Festival of Arts and Culture held in Ibadan. We have the author's word for it of why an event of the 1870s command so serious an attention in the 1970s.<sup>15</sup> We could make out our own points. The fratricidal nature of the *Kiriji* parallels the just-concluded civil war; even some of the core issues bear some likeness; struggle for power (the means of production and appropriation in the circumstance) and its attached glittering prerequisites, and the reality and fear of ethnic domination. And just like the "Protobourgeoisie"<sup>16</sup> of the earlier period, the inability of their puppets to exercise a problem-free national hegemony led substantially to the cataclysm. As in both cases, the common people significantly bore the brunt. While the untidy nature of the 1886 agreement could be said to be reflected in our continuing search for a workable political arrangement years after the first experiment - Our First Republic - collapsed.

These similarities enabled Ogunyemi to explore and comment on the nature of power and power relationships in his time. Fabunmi's rabble-rousing declamation on liberation politics could have been spoken just this morning.

*Fabunmi* ... this is just one of the many wars that will be fought in our country as long as we have greedy and over-ambitious idiots managing the affairs of our nation. Those who see the truth and dodge the truth must be Yoruba."<sup>1</sup>

*Warriors*: H e e e e e e !

*Fabunmi*: Those who corrupt the world and band people to their side with false illusions of a bright future must be wiped out of existence!

*Warriors*: H e e e e e e !

*Fabunmi*: This is the time to start it, otherwise we may end up having a country where every man is oppressed by those in positions of power. (p.28).

In his interpretation of the chosen historical material, Ogunyemi presents the main conflict as that between colonisers (the Ibadan) and the colonised (the Ekiti and Ijesa). Such oversimplifications run the risk of being superficial. It is, in a way, like saying that the Nigerian Civil War was a war between the Ibos and the rest of the country. It remains that, only to the pedestrian and myopic eye. The truth is that the *Kiriji* War, in the main, was an intra-class conflict. It sought fundamentally to determine which section of the feudal class would dominate the other - the traditional power-wielders, the monarchy, or the rising military class (created largely by the exigencies of defence after the Fulani invasion) now pressing for dominance. However, where such issues as national oppression and the 'sanctity of the tribe' are involved, as in the *Kiriji* case, the affected sections of the military class rebel and align with the tolerable archaism - the monarchy - in the struggle which has now assumed a different colour. Massive nationalist movements, for example, most often house individuals and groups with objectively differing class interests.



The celebrated 'freedom fighters' in this particular case are imperial powers, in their own right, having colonial possessions too. Also, the Ekitiparapo supported Ilorin's domination of Offa, while they are fighting *against* domination. Brilliantly, the play reveals these hypocrisies but unfortunately it is not in order to condemn them: only as further justification of the fight against Ibadan.

*Fabunmi:* They must, immediately, return those four border towns that belonged to the Ijesa to them ... And in addition allow Offa to remain as a possession of the Ilorin. Unless and until this is done, it is war! (p.46)

Fabunmi and his class are not against domination and oppression *per se* but merely against some of its manifestations as impinge on their own interests.

Stripped of their ill-fitting garment of the freedom fighter, the Ekitiparapo leaders are ultimately exchangeable for the Ibadan war hawks. A refreshingly brilliant study reveals:

In the eastern Yorubaland, the overlordship of Ibadan helped to produce a class of warriors who were privileged in power, wealth and aristocratic style of living. Among the leading members of these soldiers were Ogedengbe of Ilesa, Fabunmi of Imesi Igbodo, Aduloju of Ado Ekiti and Olugbosin of Oye. These men became threats to the established authorities. Ogedengbe for example became a threat to the *Owa* of Ilesa and a self-appointed messiah of the Ijesa. He built a personal army known as the *Ipave* to defend, and fight for him. He became extremely influential in Ilesa politics, installing *Owas* of his choice attacking the chiefs and acting as the spokesman of the Ijesa in Ibadan, Ekiti and Lagos.<sup>17</sup> What we are saying is that the war is not a war of liberation as presented in the play but a war of survival and boundary adjustments among the ruling class. The common people, "slaves," soldiers and peasants are carried along chiefly by illusions of military glory on one hand (Ibadan) and empty nationalistic sentiments on the other (Ekitiparapo).

Ogunyemi tries admirably to lay a solid criticism against the fratricidal war. The section in Act 1 Scene 6 between the two little boys amply demonstrates this. The boys act out in succession the needlessness of war among brothers, the tyranny of power and the need for the strong to protect the weak. The author hands his opposition to war basically on the peg of a common language:

*First Boy:* I won't hit you because we speak the same language.  
Get up.

*Second Boy:* (Get up) But our people kill in spite of that.

*First Boy:* They are foolish ... (p.23)

Where concrete social, political and economic issues are the objects of contention - as in the *Kiriji* War - appealing to slippery moralities like 'blood ties,' 'common language' *et cetera* is like fetching water with a basket; to condemn the war on these accounts is to evince a simplistic understanding of history. "The empiricism of observation alone can never adequately prove necessity..."<sup>18</sup> a sage insightfully warned over 100 years ago.

In the "Historical Background" to the play, Bolanle Awe asserts that "In the actual warfare, there was no victor, no vanquished...."<sup>19</sup> The author himself was to echo this in the cited interview with Adelugba.<sup>20</sup> We do not share this jejune view of historical reality. It takes only little probing to discover that in such wars as the Kiriji (and the Nigerian Civil war, for another example), "the big profits are not made by little people"<sup>21</sup> - the soldiers and peasants; the common people on both sides lose the war while the generals win it. Historians record with a sober sense of duty that 'the battles cost many lives,' 'the casualties were very high.' But we ask: who did the dying? Latoosa or Osungbekun, Ogedengbe or Fabunmi.?

This misinterpretation of history is sublimated artistically in the play's peripheral attention to the common people who did the actual fighting both with arms at the battle-front and with hoes at home producing to sustain the war effort. Rather, the play is populated with war lords, kings and princes. Of course the common people appear: they must if only to 'authenticate' the big shots.' They appear as committing mass suicide in the face of oppression (pp.7-8) or as docile foils for the Ajeles' tyranny (pp.19-21). In a way, these indict Ibadan imperialism, but more importantly, they cast a too negative image of the common people in the play. At other times, their marginalisation by war is used as pawn in leadership tussles such as that between Oshungbekun and Latoosa (p.65), or else, they are faceless warriors always following the generals' commands like zombies. What else could this mean?

*Fabunmi:* ... If you are not tired, then salute your leader.

*Warriors:* Long live Balogun Fabunmi: Heeeee!

*Fabunmi:* (Breaks into a song)  
Just go on taking orders  
Slaves do not argue (with their owner)  
Go on taking orders

*Warriors:* Slaves do not argue!

*Fabunmi:* Go on taking orders

*Warriors:* Slaves do not argue! (p.50)

At a point, Ogunyemi introduces the metaphysical to influence the course of the struggle (pp.50-51). The belief in witches and witchcraft is an illusion, a phantom, a particular form of consciousness that has *objectively* outlived its feudal material base.<sup>22</sup> The conscious historical dramatist realises this. Significantly insinuating is the fact that never once does Osofisan give play to this kinds of palliative in his *Morountodun* in spite of the fact that such weird and fantastic stories are still common currency in discussions of the farmers' uprising by many people. In *Kinjeketile* by the East African Ebrahim Hussein, where the supernatural plays a crucial role, it is used only to unite a divided people in order to create a stronger front against the common enemy, thereafter, the general, Kinjeketile insisted on basing the struggle on concrete and practical military realities. *Kiriji* is not for a 19th century audience,

it must therefore, *also* reflect the reality of its time, how the examples of yesterday can help illuminate today and tomorrow. Realism, we insist, must go beyond the mere replicating of archaic forms,

true realism has to do more than just make reality recognisable in the theatre. One has to be able to see through it too. One has to be able to see the laws that decide how the processes of life develop.<sup>23</sup>

The colonial authorities in the play go away with the truly edifying image of the peacemaker, the only saviour. We wonder if this is all, historically. A section of Rev. Wood's speech reveals the underlying economic motive when it is situated in a context which makes the colonials' role largely justifiable, even humanitarian:

... these long standing dissensions which are the cause of so much bloodshed and misery and which are seriously affecting the prosperity of Lagos ... (p.60).

Who benefits from the 'prosperity' of Lagos? And more: what role does foreign firearms play in the conflict, and what is its connection with the duration of hostilities? The conscious playwright would not overlook these 'minor' issues. And if the British were indeed genuine peacemakers then, would this view still be tenable in the author's time in the light of the unmitigated disaster that was the accompanying colonialism and its reigning heir, neocolonialism? We call on Walter Benjamin to run his flaming sword through the veil of this bourgeois practice:

To historians who wish to relive an era, Fustel de Coulanges recommend that they blot out everything they know about the later course of history. There is no better way of characterising the method with which historical materialism has broken. It is a process of empathy whose origin is the indolence of the heart, *acedia*, which despairs of grasping and holding the genuine historical image as it flares up briefly.<sup>24</sup>

By far the most positive outlook in the play is demonstrated by the spies of both sides in the war - Amin and Alore. They unite and make clear distinction between their class, "the fighting men" (p.72) and the generals. But this does not endure: their necessary unity is broken by what objectively they have little to profit from - colonial boundary disputes (p.74). In the "Epilogue" they declare a truce, even exchange kola nuts and express resentment about the war. But again, the positive image is erased as hostilities resume immediately. In a sense, this may be said to reflect the sporadic disputes today over the boundaries of the 1886 Treaty. As "canon booms and the stage is engulfed in smoke" (p.76), the author treats us to this final - no doubt intentionally philosophical - speech by one of the spies, poised to shoot the other:

We may bid arms good-bye today, but there will always be wars, my friend, until the cat and the mouse learn to live together as brothers. But I am afraid, that day will never come. (p.76)<sup>25</sup>

This is a brilliantly eloquent defeatism and pessimism, an apologetic philosophy which not only justifies war but also scorns man's daily struggles for a trouble-free

life and denies him of hope.

A work of art may not be a thesis on the ultimate significant statements on the condition of man and generalises from the particular 'slice' of reality it elects to represent: the artist is therefore well liable for any error of portrayal. All art, whatever the subtle qualifications - if any - we might introduce, is propaganda: for this or that cause. In our contemporary world of ever-deepening contradictions between the social character of production and the private form of appropriation and the grandiose mystifications manufactured to keep this so, nothing is more disagreeable than the artist's distorted or hazy portrayal of his historical reality.

Ogunyemi is a royalist and he views history through the narrow perspectives of the royal class. Witness his other major plays: *Ijaye War*, *Aole*, *Obaluaye*, *Esu Elegbara*, *The Vow*, *The Scheme*, *Langbodo*. Even so his craft still needs improvement to match the technical excellence of some of the other royalists on our shelves - Shakespeare, or at a local level, Ola Rotimi in his early plays. *Kiriji* is fatigued under the weight of historical data, many of the scenes are repetitive and flat. The language in many places is jarred, for example (the very first speech of the play) "If Ibadan war boys have the power to seize the world, they will cripple the nation in the name of oppression and dwarf all who refused to be oppressed (p.3). And the transliteration from the Yoruba, especially of some of the proverbs, come out forced and taut.

The Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo in the preface to their historical drama on the Kenyan anti-colonial struggle, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, articulate our point:

We believe that good theatre is that which is on the side of the people, that which without masking mistakes and weaknesses gives people courage and urges them to higher resolves in their struggles for total liberation. So the challenge was to truly depict the masses ... in the only historically correct perspective: positively heroically and as the true makers of history.<sup>26</sup>

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## Chapter Forty One

# Yoruba Facialographic Art and Oyo Expansionism\*

Moyo Okediji

Warfare and insecurity may permanently or temporarily obliterate the memory of a nation. It is remarkable to observe how a huge city like Old Oyo has become a mere archaeological curio. In a similar manner, owing partly to the ravages of war, certain Yoruba art forms have become museum objects, obscure, ignored and displaced.

One dying Yoruba art form is facialography. During the power struggles of the scarlet century 1793-1893, and consequent upon the chaos, there were several rapid social changes, which adversely affected the growth of facialographic art. The chaos probably increased its popularity initially and clearly demonstrated its potentialities and kinetics in a nation at war with itself. The peace brought about by the Treaty has however not smiled upon the art form which has been experiencing a slow but sure and painful death.

Facialography could never again reach the height of popularity which it once enjoyed. Only two centuries after the reign of Abiodun, 1770-1789, the image of facialography is already tarnished. Although it is seldom regarded as an art form nowadays, it is not completely ignored, as many people do modern art. Wherever it still survives, even many Yoruba indigenes tend to oppose it as an irrelevant activity, obsolete and of no worthy value in contemporary times.

However, facialography is one of the few surviving art forms which reflect the fortunes and misfortunes of various Yoruba groups before, during and after the wars.

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\*Facialography is used in preference to popular terms like facial scarification, which conjures the image of ugliness and instant objection. The second, tribal marks, is not appropriate because facialography is not descriptive of tribes, but delineates families and kins. The third term, facial marks, creates a false, extremely simplistic, impression by referring to an elaborate art form as mere marks. Facialography means facial graphics, or the graphics of the face.

It is not limited to Oyo groups but our study shows the penetration of Oyo facialographic designs into other Yoruba territories, especially during the wars. Osifekunde in his narration told D'Avezac that "The badge of the great Oyo nation is four horizontal cuts on either mouth."<sup>1</sup> Osifekunde, a French slave of Ijebu-Yoruba origin, was recollecting events in Yorubaland during the early years of the 1800s. He described only one type of Oyo facialographic design, the one worn by Oyo palace slaves, who usually served as warriors, traders and ambassadors of the *Alaafin* of Oyo. Indeed as the Oyo people appear to have been prominent in Ijebuland since the 17th century,<sup>2</sup> Osifekunde in the late 18th century, might have met a number of these palace personnels, wearing facialographic designs.

The mixing and mingling of the Oyo people with the other Yoruba sub-groups during its era of expansion produced a situation in which almost every Yoruba group now has non-Oyo indigenes, who sport Oyo facialographic designs, but speak non-Oyo Yoruba dialects. These indigenes (non-Oyo wearers of Oyo facialographic designs) clearly manifest the remnants of the cultural influences of Oyo, almost two centuries after the collapse of Old Oyo.

Three patterns of imperialism are significant to the study of Yoruba art, including facialography. First, there is the domination of Yoruba people by foreigners. Second, there is the domination of foreigners by Yoruba people. Third, there is the domination of certain Yoruba groups by other Yoruba groups. The three patterns of imperialism correspond respectively to three types of Yoruba migration.

The first is the movement of people into Yorubaland from the outside. The second is the movement of Yoruba people from their own territories into the territories of other ethnic groups. The third type of migration is the movement of Yoruba people from one part of Yorubaland to the other. Yet an original and stable body of cultural patterns and traits (not easy to pin point) distinguishes Yoruba groups and consolidates their distinct characteristics, even as they mix with other peoples, and interact among themselves.

The three parallel patterns of imperialism and migration identified above are associated with warfare, instability and tension. Imperial reign is always heavy on colonised peoples. In the first type of Yoruba experience of imperialism, Nupe and Benin peoples over-ran some parts of Yorubaland. In the second type of imperialism, Yoruba people imposed themselves on Nupe, Bariba and Dahomey peoples. Even the Ga and Ashanti peoples paid tributes during the reign of *Alaafin* Agboluaje. And in the early years of the 19th century, Oyo groups had imposed themselves on other Yoruba groups, including the Ife, Ijesa and Ekiti groups, making the third type of imperialism. In the course of these events, certain groups oppressed others.

Facialography was partly used to distinguish between the oppressor and the oppressed as we shall later see. It also became a way by which the oppressed could identify with the oppressor.

Some people think that facialography is in fact a disfiguration process. They have a right to their opinions. The critics who have no justification at all are those who say that there is no order or creativity in facialography. Such critics fail to observe the cultural purposes of art in particular societies. Such critics represent the crisis that underlie the production and appreciation of Yoruba art in general. Many Western

scholars, have opined that those objects found in Yorubaland prior to colonialism could not be regarded as art proper. Since traditional African art objects are not informed by European tastes, those critics have pontificated that these African objects do not qualify as art. Since the word 'art' is derived from the West, the writers are misled to assume that the West has a monopoly over art.

Such an unreliable assumption is based on the erroneous belief that there is only one universal concept of art. This universal concept is at the same time presumed to be Western or Euro-American. All other expressions of art, whether Asian or African are wrongly disregarded as mere pretensions after art. Rowland Abiodun quoted Ruskin as saying that in 'Christian Europe alone, pure and precious art exists, for there is none in ... Africa.'<sup>3</sup>

This assertion implies that the cultures of the Northern hemisphere regard African concepts of art as untenable or of low quality. This is the monopoly syndrome, resulting from the tastes of an essentially jealous, monomaniac capitalist or socialist culture. Related to the monopoly syndrome is another anomaly named the metamorphosis notion, concocted by Maquet.<sup>4</sup> He thinks that since African sculpture was not intended for use as objects of visual contemplation, then these material objects could not be regarded as art. He also insists that the products were not seen as art by the producers. According to him, the objects become art only after they are removed from their original uses or users, and displayed in a museum for the purposes of contemplation. A type of metamorphosis occurs in the museum showcases, elevating the objects from mere tools and toys to the much glorified stature of art.

What Maquet described as a metamorphosis is in fact a dislocation. Art works could be culturally dislocated from one society to another, thereby generating confusion. Many African art objects are dislocated in various types of undue cultural transplantations and graftings, resulting in obscurity. Cultural dislocation is prone to problems because concepts of art differ from culture to culture. According to Phillip Dark, following Riegl, Wifflin and Vernon,

art is considered to be those products which man has created as a result of the application of his knowledge and skill according to the canons of taste held as artistic by his culture ... art is a part of a culture and functions in it...<sup>5</sup>

Yoruba art is therefore clearly different from Western art. Each culture operates a distinct concept of aesthetics and creativity. Yet some writers are at variance with the thoughts of classic writers like Hegel, Tolstoy and Collingwood. These new critics do not use Western canons to condemn African art. They now use these same foreign canons to justify African art. An authoritative little book on African sculpture by William Fagg and Margaret Plass,<sup>6</sup> epitomises this trend; it needs not be encouraged, since it is still reminiscent of those 19th century Eurocentric diffusionists, espousing theories of pure contemplation.

The notion of pure contemplation is now application to many contemporary Yoruba art works. The notion holds that an art work is essentially for pure contemplation and for nothing beyond this. Western art is therefore divided into visual, literary and musical categories, among others. Visual arts include painting, sculpture, ceramics, textile and graphic designs. The literary arts include novels,



plays, essays, short stories and poems. Musical arts include wind, percussion and vocal compositions.

Yoruba art tradition is nevertheless not essentially or exclusively for contemplation. Some scholars however have spoken of visual and verbal categories in African art. Phillip Dark wrote that "The canons of taste held as artistic are the corpus of aesthetic values of the culture...." Yet he subscribed to the separation of African art into visual and verbal categories. It is clear, however, that Yoruba art does not submit itself to such a verbal and visual dichotomy.

For the verbal/visual categorisation cannot cover Egungun, masquerade, to take an example of Yoruba art. Some writers have suggested that Egungun is a performing dramatic art, while other scholars hold that it is "more visual than verbal."

Verbal and visual terminologies are designed for art objects made for 'pure contemplation,' if there is anything like that. In order to categorise Yoruba art, alternative terminologies must be devised, or the attempt to categories abandoned. Yoruba art is not a mono-media expression. It involves the combination of several media into a single form of expression. A good example is found in the mentioned Egungun masquerade, whose composition includes visual and verbal elements among others. Sculpture, poetry, chants, music, dance, costumes and other props are combined into the grand multi-media Egugun masquerade. Other Yoruba art forms are also multi-media, including *Sango* paraphernalia *Ifa* objects and *Opo* pole sculpture, all beyond the scope of mere contemplation. In this sense facialography is significant and meaningful as an art form beyond mere contemplation. Facialography is part of certain ancestral myths, rituals, and politics, playing a specific role in Yoruba power structure, as we shall later illustrate.

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Who invented facialography and why? Clarks attempted to answer this question in 1971 by remarking that

The practice of marking the face ... has its origin ... founded on the unhappy state of the people of the lower countries who became so jealous of each other that marks of discernment were necessary. Those marks differed in different tribes and have led to many a recognition and reunion that would never have taken place but for the figures that forever stamp the fact of the tribe on the individual...<sup>8</sup>

Clarke's explanation is not to be taken too seriously, being a type of generalisation which foreigners were apt to make about African art during his lifetime. For more reliable solution to the problem of the origin of facialography, we may have to look more closely at Yoruba oral tradition. In any case, there will always be diverse answers to the question of the origin of facialography. Each answer helps to throw some light on the nature of the question. To that extent, every answer is relevant. We know that many Yoruba neighbours, including the Bariba, Borgu and Nupe also wear facialographic designs. Does this suggest that all of these people belong to one homogenous group? Or did these neighbours learn the art of facialography from Yoruba people? It is also possible to suggest that Yoruba people learnt the art from

their northern neighbours, particularly the Hausa people. Probably the thousands of Hausa slaves who tended horses in Old Oyo wore facialographic designs.

There are myriads of Yoruba myths about the origin of facialography. Doubtlessly, therefore, it is a mythographic art. This means that it is a graphic representation of certain myths. It furthermore contributes to the understanding of Yoruba history. In all the myths about facialography, there is one recurrent theme: migration and its effects on national identity and integrations. One Yoruba myth indicates that *Ifa* instructed *Oduduwa* to make facialographic designs on all Yoruba people, prior to a major migration.<sup>9</sup> Another myth states that facialography started after *Sango* attempted to trace his origin outside Yorubaland. When we examine these and other myths, we gather that facialography is linked closely with the movement of large numbers of people from one part of Africa to the other. An attempt is made to homogenise a large number of the migrants, with the use of a few facialographic designs. The designs symbolise both unity and diversity.

There is reliable evidence to show that facialography is an ancient art among Yoruba people. The most convincing proof of the above is found in Yoruba sculpture. Many Ife bronze heads have fine facialographic lines. This suggests that facialography was practised along side bronze casting, in ancient Ife. There are also some Ife bronze heads without facialographic designs. Could the non-facialographed bronze heads be reflecting the Olufe royal family? The members of the Olufe family of Ile-Ife did not wear facialographic designs. There are several myths relating how the Olufe people have ended up as non-facialographed. One version states that they are descendants of a slave, called Abu, the Abused One, who later became the ruler of Ife. Another version traces the Olufe people to *Oduduwa*: *Ifa* instructed *Oduduwa* to make facialographic designs on the cheeks of his (*Oduduwa's*) own offspring, to prevent infant mortality. While other Ife indigenes continued to wear facialographic designs, the direct offspring of *Oduduwa* were forbidden from wearing them.

*Oriki* Olufe, the praise poetry of the Olufe family is replete with references to facialography.<sup>10</sup> This is apparently to explain away the absence of the art among the Olufe. The praise poetry creates the impression that facialography is all vanity. It suggests that facialography probably started as an art of idle body decoration.

*Asa keke ogun*  
*Aajo ewa ara la fi se*  
*A babaja ogbon*  
*Aajo ewa ara la fi se*

When we wear *keke* facialographic designs with twenty strokes  
 It is all body decoration  
 Or we wear *abaja* facialographic designs with thirty lines  
 All is in aid of body decoration.

Being averse to such vanity, Olufe people refrain from decorating their cheeks with facialographic designs. They claim that there is sufficient beauty in a natural, blank, non-facialographed faced, referred to as

*Soboro*

*Soboro l'Olorun yan mi,*

*Emi ni n o wa fi ilakila se !*

God created me as *soboro* without facialographic lines,

What have I then to do with facialography !

However, Oyo people who wear facialography assume that it symbolises a lack of enlightenment when others remain without facialographic design. Oyo people believe that facialography enhances one's natural beauty. To fully appreciate these designs, they should be observed in action, especially in a dance to dundun music. Beyond this, Oyo people regard facialography as a means of promoting and projecting an image of sophistication. Oyo facialography celebrates the lavish splendour of the great Oyo Kingdom. The individual was expected to carry himself first and foremost as an Oyo man, whatever may chance. "*Aji-se-bi-Oyo laa ri, Oyo kii se bi enikan*": Oyo people are imitated, but never imitate, according to a Yoruba proverb.

It was an essential part of Oyo tradition to wear facialographic designs. Many Oyo indigenes still wear these embellishments. Each family, group or community has its own set of symbols, wherever facialography is practiced in Yorubaland. According to Johnson, "facial marks are for the purpose of distinguishing the various Yoruba families." Furthermore, he continues:

The Oyo marks are *Abaja*, *Keke*, or *Gombo*, (and) *Ture*... The *Abaja Oro* i.e. the upright *Abaja* is distinctive of the Egbas... The Egbado marks are the same as the Oyo marks... Owu marks (are) variations of Oyo marks... Ife are usually plain faced... The Ijesas as a rule have no distinctive marks...<sup>11</sup>

Complex as this system appears, it is quite simple in operation. Everybody who is acquainted with the culture will fairly easily trace the origin of any facialographic design found on anybody. People are referred to according to whether they wear facialgraphics or not. Those who wear facialgraphic designs are referred to according to the types of design worn. Facialography thereby becomes an index of identity, as the Olufe poetry shows below.

*Bi mo ba tori onikeke ku*

*N o pe iku arewa lo pogo*

*Bi mo ba tori soboro ku*

*Mba wipe iku arewa lo pogo*

Should I die (fall in love) for *onikeke*

I would say it's chivalrous

Should I die (fall in love) for *soboro*

I would say it's chivalrous.

*Onikeke* simply refers to a wearer of *keke* facialgraphic design, comprising of three or more strokes on either cheek. On the other hand, *soboro* refers to the natural, blank face, as we said earlier. Generally, those who wear facialgraphic designs are referred to as *Okola*, a term which is now attracting derogatory connotations.

There has been much teasing between the *soboro* and the *okola*. The banter is ideological as well as aesthetic. *Soboro* could understand the *okola* when those marks are not very many. But, when they become too many, the *soboro* objects. This is stated in the *Oriki Olufe*:

*Emi o ni tori oniperense ku*  
*Abila merindinlogun*  
*Oniperense abila logido*  
*Erukeru abilala lenu*  
*Gambari onilaa Yagba.*

Never will I die (fall in love) for those *perense*, wearers  
 With sixteen facialographic lines  
 Perense wearers, with oblique patterns  
 Mere slaves with sloppy facial lines.  
*Gambari* strains, wearing *Yagba* designs.

*Perense* refers to a complex type of facialography favoured by the northern neighbours of the Yoruba, namely the Nupe, Ebira and Hausa. All of them are generally referred to here as *Gambari* in the fifth line. It is remarkable that the *Perense* design is found on many Ife bronze heads, though Ife is quite distant from Northern Nigeria. Further research on this observation may yield startling result concerning the precolonial relationship among Nigerian ethnic groups.

The facialographic designs used by Oyo people range from the simple three-stroke *keke*, to the very complex multiple-stroke *abaja*. For example in the Apaara area of Oyo, there are several types of facialographic designs available to the indigenes, including *Abaja*, *keke* and *Pele*. Yet these designs are not monopolised by the Apaara section. Other sections like Owode and Akesan also use similar designs. This shows the eclectic nature of the present city of Oyo: it is composed of several villages which were once independent and separate units.<sup>12</sup> These units probably used separate facialographic designs, when they were independent. Since they were forced to exist within the same metropolis, and under the same *Alaafin* rulership, they brought their various facialographic designs with them. The new metropolis is therefore full of several designs from several sources. At the same time the trained eye could observe certain differences of lines and shades between apparently identical designs. The *gombo* design worn by the people of Apaara is quite different from the one used by the people of Awe, all in the same Oyo metropolis.

Facialography, being an indicator of family lines, also shows the social stratification in the Oyo Kingdom. The Oyo royal families wear several variations of a uniform set of facialographic designs. The *abaja mefa-mefa* is reserved for the princes and princesses. *Abaja mejo-mejo* is worn by some palace chiefs and slaves. It is easy to tell those who belong to the palace, from the type of facialography worn by a commoner. A commoner is thus easily detected from individuals with the royal blood. The commoners in Oyo wear several variations of *Gombo* mostly, though some wear *Pele* as well.

The *Tondo* and *Baamu* facialographic designs are common all over Yorubaland. The *Tondo* is a small intense stroke on the cheek bone, under each eye. It is like a mark of decoration, usually executed to add to the feminine beauty. Some men also



wear the *Tondo* design, lending them an effeminate touch. The *Baamu* is popularised by the people of Ogbomoso who wear a heavy combination of *Gombo* and *Baamu*. In many parts of Yorubaland, Abiku children - those mysterious children who die at will - are marked with the *Baamu* design to neutralize their power, even among groups that normally wear no faciallographic designs.

The physical beauty or ugliness of a designed face usually depends on the success or failure of the faciallographic design. It forms a lyrical lineal pattern on the cheeks, playing on equidistant-spacing of lines. The lines usually fall in a repeated order, with or without variations in length and depth. As the lines fall repeatedly, a rhythm is generated as a result of the visual illusion of continuity, in space and time, which repeated patterns tend to create. The patterns relieve the blankness of a face with spectacular movement, activating the erstwhile empty surface.

The description given above is of course no better than a generalisation. The result of faciallography depends on the touch of the artist, whether he is a master or a novice. A successful production results in a work of permanent attraction, which lasts the entire lifetime of an individual. This is a taste statement made from an essentially Oyo aesthetics. The cannons of these aesthetics were soon to be heard in several parts of Yorubaland, fired by the Oyo/Ibadan expansionist machinery.

Nowadays we are used to communities consisting of both wearers and non-wearers of faciallography. It is reasonable to assume that there was a period in the past, when only certain Yoruba groups wore faciallography and others did not. Gradually, mutual diffusion apparently occurred, until both types became thoroughly well mixed.

It is therefore possible to refer to the Yoruba groups originally without faciallography as the *Soboro* nonfaciallographic type; the other group could be referred to as the *Okola* faciallographic type, comprising of those who started it (faciallography) in Yorubaland. It is reasonable to regard the Ife-Ijesa-Ekiti groups as the *soboro* type, while the Oyo-Egba-Ibadan-Oke Ogun groups could be viewed as the *Okola* type. Here we can see that the former are in southern Yorubaland while the latter occupy northern Yorubaland.

The interaction between the two types (the faciallographic type and the nonfaciallographic types) was inevitable, resulting in cultural imitations, borrowings and lendings. However, in such a situation, change was bound to come, but the pace of the change was smooth, slow and organic. This natural cultural interaction between *Okola* and *Soboro* types persisted in many parts of Yorubaland during the relatively peaceful period, up to the era of Abiodun's reign.

However, emergency conditions soon forced the natural flow of change, and events began to happen rather rapidly. After Abiodun's death in 1789 and for about a century thereafter there was intensive migration, accompanied by warfare, looting and wanton destruction of life and property. That migration was essentially intra-ethnic, involving the movement of Yoruba people from one part of the Yoruba country to another.

At that particular period, faciallography proved most useful to Yoruba people in several ways. Those who moved from one part to the others included not only free men, but also thousands of slaves. In certain cases, some slave owners forcibly impressed their faciallographic designs on the cheeks of their *soboro* slaves, or on the offsprings of these slaves. This made it difficult for the slaves to escape, since wherever

they might seek refuge, they would find problems of integration due to their facialographic designs. Some slaves also took advantage of the collapse of order to adopt the facialographic designs of their masters. This is apparently in an attempt to integrate within the new environment in which the slaves found themselves. Others also adopted the facialographic designs of Oyo people, in order to identify with the image of the conqueror, for protection purposes. Oyo expansionism, sanguinity and migration during the scarlet century have already been vividly described by many scholars, including Johnson, Law and Akinjogbin.

By 1893 when the Anglo-Yoruba Treaty was signed, many Ife/Ijesa/Ekiti towns like Ile-Ife, Ikire, Iragbiji and Otu already had large settlements of Oyo immigrants, wearing Oyo facialographic designs. A good example is Ile Ife. Within the city is a compound called Ile Timi, claimed to consist of immigrants from Ede. It is remarkable that the facialography worn in the said compound is quite different from those found in other parts of Ile-Ife, but similar to those worn in Modakeke, another Oyo diaspora at the outskirts of Ile-Ife.

The Oyo diasporas in several parts of Yorubaland, consists of elements wearing Oyo facialographic design, to show off their connection with the great Oyo Kingdom. In many ways facialography served as a type of battle dress, because during the scarlet century, facialography was the basic uniform worn by Yoruba warriors. There were no uniforms for the various armies, unlike what we have today. Then, the soldier was identified by whether he was *okola* (facialographed) or *soboro* (non-facialographed). If he was *okola*, you could tell which part of Yorubaland he was from, by reading his facialograph. This was practically demonstrated recently during the 1983 Modakeke/Ife riots. Facialography became very significant again in the patterns of politics and violence. The facialographic design clearly communicated a message: it was either the facialography of the enemy or of friends. It was easy to distinguish Ife from Modakeke people, simply by reading the type of facialography worn. It was enough to wear the facialography of the enemy, to be counted as one. Only those who were *soboro* did not feel quite so exposed, and could claim neutrality.

These facialographic designs were also an expression of nationalistic ego, propaganda and pride, prior to and even after the peace Treaty. The 1897 treaty not only put an end to the bloody century, it also formally marked the British intervention in Yoruba power politics. It symbolises the passing of power from Yoruba *Obas* to the British government. The reins of politics and power moved from Oyo to London.

The taste of the people did not remain stagnant, but naturally followed the dictates of power and politics. Since political power then resided in London, the centre of popular taste moved from Oyo to London. Since the British wore no facialographic designs, the Oyo taste for facialography was no longer relevant to the majority of Yoruba people.

Given the fact that taste is linked with power which backs it, is it, therefore, surprising that facialography is no longer popular? It only promotes the taste of an ex-power, now rendered almost totally senile. People have turned their allegiance to the new centre of culture and facialography thereby becomes marginalised. The battle line was drawn and at the end of the cultural encounter, the Western cannons of aesthetics won, insisting that facialography is mere tribal facial scarification, an

abominable savagery, poles apart from art.

Wherever facialography survives therefore, it is not only a threat to the monopolistic illusions of Western aesthetics. It is also a challenge to the Northern hemisphere, expressing the survival instincts of the oppressed cultures in the Southern hemisphere. It has become part of a subtle subconscious and willful collective protest by the oppressed South, against the aggressive cultural expositions and praxis of the Northern hemisphere.

However, thus faced with aggressors from both within and without, facialography has a dim future. It is fated to suffer an imminent and unmourned extinction in Yoruba art, marking the taste of a volatile phase in human history - the era of Oyo expansionism, in particular.

## Notes and References

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2. Law, Robin: *The Oyo Empire*, Oxford, 1977.
3. Abiodun, Rowland: "Naturalism in Primitive Art: A Survey of Attitude," *ODU*, N.S. No. 11 January 1975, p.130.
4. See Ojo, J.R.O.: "Descriptive Terms and the Study of Traditional African Art," *Proceedings of the 4th Annual Congress of the Nigeria Folklore Society*, University of Ife, 1984.
5. Dark, Phillip: "The Study of Ethno-Aesthetics: The visual Arts," in *Essays on the verbal and visual Arts*, Proceedings of the 1966 Annual spring meeting of the AES; ED, Press, p.132.
6. William, Margaret and Fagg, *Plas African Sculpture*, Studio Vista, London, 1964.
7. Dark, Phillip: *op. cit.*, p.132.
8. Clarke, W.H.: *Travels and Explorations in Yorubaland 1854-1858*, Ibadan. University Press, Ibadan, 1972, p.244.
9. See Adeoye, C.L.: *Asa Ati Ise Yoruba*, O.U.P. Ibadan, 1979.
10. See Babalola, Adeboye: *Awon Oriki Orile*, Collins, Glasgow, 1967, p.23.
11. Johnson, Samuel: *The History of the Yorubas* London, 1921, p.106.
12. *Ibid.*

## **Chapter Forty Two**

# **The 19th Century Wars in Yorubaland - A Bibliographical Survey**

**Adebayo Olaosun**

### **Brief Survey**

The major source of the literature of the wars is Johnson's *History of the Yorubas* (1921) which devotes the greater portion of its content to the historical account of the wars. Other sources are Otunba-Payne's *Table of principal events in Yoruba history* (1893) George's *Historical notes on the Yoruba country* (1895) and *British Parliamentary papers* (vol. 63 & 64) (1893).

Monographic works entirely devoted to the account of the wars are few: Ajayi and Smith's *Yoruba warfare in the 19th century* (1964), Akintoye's *Revolution and power politics in Yoruba-land, 1840-1893* (1971) and Falola and Oguntomisin's *Military in the 19th century Yoruba politics* (1984). There are however Smith's *Kingdoms of the Yoruba* (1969) and Lloyd's *Political development of Yoruba kingdoms in the 18th and 19th centuries* (1971) which are devoted to aspects of the subject.

Journal articles that deal generally with the wars are several and include Inikori's "A century of internecine wars in Yorubaland" (1964), Law's "Chronology of the Yoruba wars of the early 19th century: a reconsideration" (1970) and Akintoye's "Ife's sad century (19th)" (1970). A serialised account of the wars by Ogunniran is currently running in the new Yoruba monthly: *Okin Oloja* (July 1986 -). Remarkable also is Olomola's account: "Conduct of war and peace among the Yoruba" (1977).

The period immediately before the wars is treated in Akinjogbin's "Prelude to the Yoruba civil wars of the 19th century" (1965), in Aderibigbe's "Rivalry among Yoruba states in the 19th century," (1965) and in Adediran's "The Western Yorubaland on the eve of the Yoruba civil wars of the 19th century" (1980).

Specific areas receive the attention of certain authors: Akinjogbin gives the historical account of the Yoruba - Dahomey aspect in *Dahomey and its neighbours* (1967) and Ayandele in "Yoruba civil wars and the Dahomean confrontation" (1979).



Both the Oyo and Ibadan Empires receive the attention of Altison: "The last days of Old Oyo" (1968); Smith: "Event and portent: the fall of old Oyo, problem in historical explanation" (1971); Atanda: "The fall of the Old Oyo Empire: a reconsideration of its cause" (1973) and "New Oyo Empire" (1973); and Babayemi's unpublished thesis: *The fall and rise of Oyo, c.1760-1905* (1979). On Ibadan's involvement in the war Awe's unpublished thesis *The rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba power* (1964) and her "End of an experiment: the collapse of the Ibadan Empire 1893" (1965) contain historical accounts.

The war leaders also receive some attention in Ajayi's "Professional warriors in the 19th century Yoruba politics" (1965) and in Odebiyi's "Great Egba warriors" (1985). On weapons of war, Smith contributed "Yoruba armament" (1967) and "Yoruba warfare and weapons" (1973). Accounts of individual battles and battle fronts are contained in Smith's "Battle of Oshogbo" (1963), Bamgboye and Akingboade's "Kiriji War" (1964), and Akintoye's "Ekitiparapo and Kiriji War" (1966), while the Owu War is dealt with in Law's "Owu War in Yoruba history" (1973). The Ekitiparapo War is also dealt with in an account written in Yoruba by Omidiran (1955).

The economic factors of the wars are presented, in Akintoye's "Economic background of Ekitiparapo, 1878-1893" (1968), in Norris' account of the rapid economic growth in Abeokuta during the period of the Ijaye War, 1860-1864 (1978) and in Falola's "Military warfare and the political economy of Ibadan, c.1830-1900" (1981).

The Ijebu relationship with the rest of the Yoruba during this period can be found in Ayantuga's unpublished thesis *The Ijebu and their neighbours* (1965). Egba involvement on the other hand is contained in Biobaku's *Egba and their neighbours* (1956) and in Jones' "Report on the Egba army in 1861" (1964). Historical accounts of the Benin Kingdom and the Yorubas during this period is also to be found in Akintoye's "North-eastern Yoruba district and the Benin Kingdom." (1969) and some accounts in Egharevba's short history of Benin 4th ed. (1968).

The coastal areas of Lagos and Badagry also feature prominently in these major events of the 19th century. Accounts of these are found in Wood's *Historical notes of Lagos* (1933); Aderibigbe's thesis: *The expansion of Lagos Protectorate, 1861-1900* (1959). Law's "Dynastic chronology of Lagos" (1968); Smith's 3 contributions: "Note of Lagoon warfare among the southern Yoruba" (1968); "To the Palaver Islands: war and diplomacy on the Lagos Lagoon in 1852-1854" (1969) and "Peace Conference on the Lagos Lagoon 1859" (1969). In 1975 Aderibigbe's "Early history of Lagos to about 1850" appeared in a book he edited: *Lagos the development of an African City*. Law wrote "Trade and politics behind the slave coast: the lagoon traffic and the rise of Lagos, 1500-1800" (1983); the "Career of Adele at Lagos and Badagry c.1807-c.1837" (1978) and "Trade and politics behind the slave coast" (1983). Oguntomisin dealt with Kosoko in "Kosoko and the Chieftaincy dispute in Lagos, 1834-1851" (1980).

Travellers accounts and colonial records are also available in *British Parliamentary papers* (1893); in Stones' *African forest and jungle* (1900), Holley's "Account of journey through Yorubaland" (1881-4), Perham's *Diaries of Lord Lugard 1894-1895*

and 1898 (1963) and in *Travels and Exploration of William Henry Clarke, 1845-1858* edited by Atanda (1972).

Finally, a rich source of the information about the war period in Yoruba history is available in about all of the more than fifty histories of Yoruba towns and villages written by different authors who in most of the cases are natives of the areas presented in their works. Such writings give fragments of historical information about battles, war alliances, warriors and peace negotiations among neighbouring towns. Representative among those histories of Yoruba towns are those of Ibadan (by Akinyele 1911); Abeokuta (Ajisafe 1948); Ado-Ekiti and Akure (Oguntuyi 1952); Ojo (Bada of Shaki) presented the histories of Saki (1937) and Oyo (1954); Olugunna wrote on Oshogbo (1959), Olusola on ancient Ijebu-Ode (1968) Oyerinde (1934) wrote the history of Ogbomosho, and Fabunmi (1986) wrote on Ile-Ife.

A rich source of information is the *Oriki* of prominent Yoruba warriors. One example of this is presented in Ayorinde's *Oriki* of Ibikunle, Balogun of Ibadan (1973). But while *oriki* abounds in the oral literature of the Yoruba, documentation of them is far much less. Only a few more of them are available, like the *Oriki* of some *Timi* of Ede.

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## **Chapter Forty Three**

# **Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey at the Site of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War Camps**

### **Opeoluwa Onabajo**

Sometime in June 1986 a team made up of archaeologists and historians carried out an expedition to the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo War camp sites. One of the sites in question is between Imesi-Ile and Igbajo. The *Owa Oye* of Imesi-Ile led the team to the Ekitiparapo Camps while the Chiefs of Owa Igbajo led the visit to the Ibadan side of the camp. The *Owa Oye* of Imesi-Ile identified five historical sites: (i) The Ogedengbe sitting spot; (ii) The blacksmith spot; (iii) The stream usually referred to as "*Fejeboju*"; (iv) The refuse dump spot; (v) The spot where the Peace Treaty was signed. On the other side the Igbajo chiefs identified four historical sites: i) the Latoosa Camp; ii) The stream referred to as "*Fejeboju*"; iii) The shooting spot; iv) The spot where the Peace Treaty was signed.

### **The Ekitiparapo Sites**

On a closer investigation, the area lies in a valley with hills surrounding them and huge boulders forming embankment. Ad i) Ogedengbe was the war general on the Ekitiparapo side and informants recounted that he supervised the war from this spot, the spot revealed no archaeological material. Ad ii) At the blacksmith spot, were identified, iron slags which showed evidence of iron smelting and production. These will be of archaeological interest and importance. Ad iii) The dried up stream did not reveal any archaeological material. Ad iv) The refuse dump spot revealed on the surface, potsherds and even some stone roughouts. This particular spot will be of unique archaeological importance because the information about the warriors' material remains might be found here. Ad v) The spot where the Peace Treaty was signed was quite significant, the spot was marked by two features, 10 stones which are now buried in the ground with only about 10 cms of each showing above the ground and the planting of the *Dracaena Perennial* tree (*Peregun*). No archaeological material was found.

At the Ekitiparapo side of the war camp two spots were identified as potential archaeological sites, the blacksmith site and the refuse dump site.

## The Ibadan Sites

Ad i) The Latoosa camp, this site was a habitation site and about five middens were identified here. On the surface lots of sherds were found and some whole pots were found. This camp has to be investigated for archaeological materials. Ad iii) The dried up stream referred to as "*Fejeboju*" is the continuation of the same stream on the Ekitiparapo side, it revealed no archaeological material. Ad iv) The shooting spot is on a boulder and strategically a good spot because of its height. Ad v) The spot where the Treaty was signed is on the same spot as the Ekitiparapo side with the same 10 stones except that the *Dracaena Perennial* tree (*Peregun*) was planted on both sides of the 10 stones to form a border between the two sides.

On the whole we have identified three sites, the blacksmith spot; the refuse dump spot and the Latoosa camp. These three potential sites will give explanations for the crucial changes in human history and the explanation will have to be phrased in terms of ecology: in the systemic interplay between people as biological and cultural beings and the physical and social environment in which they find themselves and to which they must adapt.

The second reason for investigation is the emergence of urbanism and the factors that gave rise to it. This is a subject that has attracted historians and philosophers as well as archaeologists, but it is only now being investigated systematically in the field, which is surprising in view of the great amount that has been written to suggest the possible faction accounting for the phenomenon.

The above potential archaeological sites will however generate some questions: (1) Whether the sites located predates the Kiriji War; (2) whether the occupants as we know them from history are the original occupants of the sites; (3) whether the state of the abandonment of the sites was due to ecological factors or the activities of the present occupants of the area. Finding answers to the above questions will determine how viable archaeologically the sites will be.

The general topography of the area reveals that the area is in the valley and a range of hills surrounding it, which actually forms a natural fortification for the war.

In conclusion we hope that this study will throw more light on the historiography of the Yoruba by incorporating ethnohistorical data in the design of the research programme and using archaeological evidence to test the validity of oral history pertaining to the Kiriji War Camp site. Confirmation of oral traditions by the rulers of Imesi-Ile and Igbajo claiming that the hilly region was a locus of intensive human settlement engaged in iron production activities demonstrates the value of using oral history in locating regions of historic settlement and also indicate the potential of using oral historical data as an aid to historical archaeological interpretation.



## Appendix I

### **SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION ON REMINISCENCES *L'OJO J'OUN* BY CHIEF (DR.) J.A.AYORINDE (THE *ABESE OLUBADAN*)**

Their Chariot shall become a plough  
and their swords a shear or a sickle.  
The wolf shall live with the sheep,  
and the leopard lie down with the kids.  
The calf and the young lion shall grow up together.

It is both a pleasure and a pride to have been nominated to be the chairman of this special session.

#### *L'Ojo-J'oun, Reminiscences.*

Before anything else, I doff my hat to the authorities of this great University which was conceived and established with great devotion and powerful oration on 25 May 1965 by the esteemed late Premier of the former Western Region when he said among other things:

and God said let us make man in our own image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth and the air, and over every creeping thing that crept upon the earth. Here upon this spot man first demonstrated his progressive control over nature. The battle against the forces of nature still continues. The weapon of war is knowledge. All those who are privileged to drink from the fountain of knowledge in this historic spot would no doubt contribute to the growing triumph of man over the forces of nature. Ife is a great legacy. The undergraduate who would be heirs to it and others who would drink from her fountain of knowledge must respect, honour and adore her. It is a sacred name which we must all preserve.

(Thanks to Chief Dr. M.A. Fabunmi *Ife genesis* pp.143/144 refers).

It is from the Department of History of this institution that emanated the initiative to celebrate this Centenary of Peace with a view of refurbishing it with marble for the

use of generations yet unborn. And of course, this is with the goodwill of every lover of peace in our beloved country, Nigeria.

We thank God that our swords of old have been beaten into cutlasses and the spears into *Obeke* knives for cutting yam sets and other pruning knives for preparing our baskets and mats such as *awere*, *pakiti* and *atinni* for drying cocoa beans. After thanking God for travelling mercies granted to all the participants, we cannot but thank the Vice-Chancellor of this Institution for granting the permission to the History Department to organise this conference with a view to cementing that peace and decorate same with the marble of unity for the true greater tomorrow of Yorubaland, and for the coming generation. In the words of the Holy Writ,

Let us now sing the praises of famous men, the heroes of our nation's history, through whom the Lord established His renown, and revealed His Majesty in each succeeding age.

Some held sway over kingdoms and made themselves a name by their exploits. Others were sage councillors who spoke out with prophetic power. Some led the people by their counsel and by their knowledge of the nation's law; out of their fund of wisdom they gave instructions. Some were composers of music or writers of poetry. Others were endowed with wealth and strength, living peacefully in their homes. All these won fame in their own generation and were the pride of their times. Some left names behind them to be commemorated in glory as we are doing today. Yet, there are others who are un-remembered they are dead, and it is as though they had never existed, as though they had never been born, or never left children to succeed them.

Not so our fore fathers. They were men of loyalty, whose good deeds have never been forgotten. For instance, the families of all the *dramatis personae* from Ibadan, Ilesa etc, are all fully represented here. We have not come from Ibadan with the rhythm '*Sukusuku-Bamu-Bamu, Eni T'o Ba Wu K'o Be*' or '*Ara Ibadan De, Ekun P'ara-Mo*.' Nor have we the cause for the rhythm of *Ogboriefon-Sa-Fila-Fila* which is '*Ke O F'ori-So-Le, Iku De*:' or the rhythm - of *Orisaoko, Ki i S'eru Enikan*, nor '*Iro Ni Nwon Npa, Eke Ni Nwon Nse, Fuja Fuja Ni e*:' with the chorus '*Gangan-Gungan-Gungan-Gungan Je 'Su Ede, Tan*:' or the War-Camp songs such as '*Kanno-Kanno Ja-T'on Towu, Orin Ja T'on Towe*' nor *Aso-Gbo, Sokoto-Gbo, Lawani Sonu N'ibodun: B'a O Ko' Lesa A'Ko lo*:' And last, but prophetic song of all: *E Ba So F'Alara: Eba So F'Ajero, E Tun Wi F'Oba N'Ilorin, Pe Ote Yi Yio Ma Tanoo: Oju-A-Kan-Oju*'.

On the 27th instant, the *Alapansanpa* Masquerade, that often determines the number of able-bodied youngsters that could be drafted into the army will be out in Ibadan. This masquerade has been given the *Oriki* - '*Alapansanpa, baba-omo-k'omo: Janduku, baba-Bilisi*:' As the masquerade carries its festival about with the followers flogging themselves, the drummers have always said '*Alapansanpako pe enikankan, Omo nyin ni e kilo fun*' - *Alapansanpa* invites no one. You only need to give restrictive warning to your child."

We should now end with the excerpt of the 'Requiem to dying age' on the third part of the revised and enlarged 'The end of an Era in Ibadan History by Mrs. Kemi Morgan which goes as follows:

We tell of an inglorious age,  
 Of man's inhumanity to man  
 Of families torn asunder,  
 By wretched slaves, being battered for arms and ammunitions,  
 In dusty market places,  
 Beneath a sweltering sky,  
 We tell of a change of the warrior-chieftains  
 When old customs fell,  
 And tradition ceases to please.  
 When the master-warrior cries  
 Enough of that: advance:  
 Move on to pastures new:  
 Fetch new stones, build my house  
 For perfect my house must be:  
 And as we say 'Good bye' to the  
 age of the warrior chieftains of old,  
 Let us sing of a light  
 That beckons men away  
 From scenes of passions and of strife,  
 Into scenes of pure delight;  
 Of beauty, Truth and Love  
 Which alone can make perfect  
 The Whole.  
 Let us all sing a song of love that  
 will change away all hating.

*Peculiarities of Ibadan:* One may take this opportunity to portray some peculiarities of Ibadan. The first is the leaf with which the Ifa that was used was washed. This leaf is called *SINKINRINMINI*, *ti o fi ai Mo'ni ko ni mora* which makes the Ibadan to be hearty fellows well met.

Another is the fact that the Ibadan never kill their slaves. If a male, he is absorbed into their household and given a daughter for a wife. If a female, a wife is made of her just as *Aare Latoosa* had an *Ado Princess* as one of the loving ones in his household.

The *Odu Corpus* with which Ibadan was founded is *Ifa-Ose-Meji* and the Hausas have this to say of Ibadan about the propitiation and blessedness of Ibadan:

*Ibadan*  
*Carin Ntagan-shi*  
*Cerin Nadaga-shiga de yunwon*  
*Kafila da koshi*  
*Cerin N-daga-da-shige-da tautura*  
*Ka fita da Tzurma.*

Ibadan:  
 A blessed City:  
 A City that you enter in penury  
 And you leave with blessedness and wealth  
 A city that you enter in rags  
 And you depart with property

This is Ibadan: A City of hills and dales, with characteristics of her own, as prescribed

by the *Odu Ose Meji* Corpus which were buried in all the 16 gates during the founding of the City. The peaceful blessedness as perceived by the people and deemed in the shadow as real in the traditional faith and religion goes thus:

*O se kele, O gba Ogun  
O na igbaja O gba Ogoji  
O ni ti o ba di ki eyi ai ma wa  
Nje ngba egbaa  
E wo Iwaju Olokun  
Rere, Rere ni o nte rere  
E wo Ehin Olokun  
Rere Rere ni o nte rere*

From today onwards, our songs should lustily be:

*A O MA-A S'ORE ARA WA NI:  
A O MA-A S'ORE ARA WA NI:  
A SESE BERE O,  
E E - ONIYE:  
A sese bere k'ilẹ tiiri t'e n boju u je o:  
A o ma a s'ore ara wa ni.*



## Appendix II

Extracts from

### **Welcome Address by His Highness Oba Adelani Famodun II, Owa of Igbajo on 23 September 1986**

#### **What does Kiriji mean to us?**

As a people, *Kiriji* was the last physical violent conflict we had with outsiders. Igbajo, we must say, was, up till that time, a town troubled by wars. Indeed, our very existence before then was determined by wars. This place should probably be called *Ogunlende* like Inalende at Ibadan. The present site, because of its ruggedness was chosen as a hide-out for our great grandfathers. In effect, this was not the first Igbajo. This is our third port of call. The first was Igbajo-Odo-Komu. The next Igbajo was Igbajo Mayin Akure. The third is Igbajo-Iloro, Omo alagogo memu - the one we are in now. All three places are located on Igbajo land. We do not need to tell you educated University people lots of history, you are wonderful people, you spend all your time reading and thinking. You must have read and thought about some of these things. It is not the size of Igbajo's land that we want to talk about today: from the war site to this place, to the gates of Ada, Iresi, Otan, Ede all round like that. That is not so important now.

What you have made us think about is *war*. You may have all the land of this earth, but if you do not have peace, you will be running from one corner of your land to another, running after something or something running after you. Until you have peace, you may not enjoy or enjoy fully, that which you claim to have. And so Igbajo was driven from one corner of its land to another. And the last of the wars that plague us was the *Kiriji* War which lasted and lasted and lasted. *Kiriji*, you know, of course, was the sound of the gun that was used at one stage of the war.

A most annoying or sad thing is the cause of wars. We have also thought of that and we believe it should be a lesson to all of us. It is a happy thing that we can today sit down and think about it together. What you will discover is that all these fights were apparently very unnecessary. They were born out of misunderstandings. And between whom and whom? Between brothers, motherly born. History is clear on the matter - our principal enemy was Ilesa. But *Owa Ajaka* of Ilesa and *Owa Aringbajo* were born of the same mother. The third from that woman was *Oniregun* of Iregun.

Now you can see - brothers engaging in endless quarrels leading to suffering, waste and avoidable troubles. These are some of the things you historians have compelled us to think about in recent months and we thank you.

Futile as we may take the wars to have been, we are compelled to say that we cannot change the facts of history. Bad as it was, our fathers fought. And they had their reasons. We may, today, think differently from them. But there is a Yoruba proverb that says: *Eni ti o ba ni awon ara ijoun go, awon Baba re lo n ba wi*. Whatever we may feel, they did fight - if they did not, we would not be here today. But we thank God they did not exterminate one another - if not, once again, we would not be here today.

You cannot change history, if you do, that will be falsehood. If you lie somebody else will dig up the truth or the truth will, of itself, raise its own head and stare you in the face. You cannot deny history but we can learn a lot from it. And a true lesson of history stems from true knowledge. And one important fact of history which we have been compelled to cast our mind on at Igbajo has been our friendship with Ibadan. This is a friendship that we all cherish, both Ibadan and Igbajo. Ibadan people came at the right time to save us in our time of trouble, from the Ijesa-Ekiti onslaught. It will of course be foolish to think that they came all the way from Ibadan solely and simply for Igbajo. Wars are not fought like that. Alliances are based on community of interests - I do not say *same* interests. There should be the *meeting* of interests. The Ibadans were at Ikirun. They had no peace at home with the Ijebu and Egba taunting them. Then the Modakeke-Ife front was also there, with the Ekiti and Ijesa antagonism. If the Ekiti and Ijesa could overrun Igbajo and cross to Ada, then, the Ibadan would easily be dislodged from Ikirun. Defeating Ibadan at Ikirun meant of course a defeat all over the place for that belligerent city.

So, Ibadan had interest in the strategic position in which Igbajo was. Ibadan had interest in joining us and we fought on one side. That friendship was what made us belong in Ibadan province. If you go to anywhere in the whole province, you will see how Igbajo people are spread all over the place. And Ibadan itself is today a second home to many Igbajo sons and daughters.

That friendship with Ibadan is of personal interest to us. We, as you know, are Famodun II. Our grandfather Famodun I was the *Owa* who reigned at Igbajo during the Kiriji crisis. It was he who identified an effective ally in the circumstances. Our grandfather also lived during the signing of the Treaty. It is a happy coincidence for us that today we are celebrating 100 years of the signing of the Treaty, it has fallen on us, another Famodun, to receive the commemorators of peace.

If we have spoken of Ibadan this way, it is not to reopen the hostility with Ijesa or Ekiti. We spoke earlier on, of our connection with Ijesa. The point that we would like to stress is that we are Ijesa by virtue of our birth and we are Oyo by friendship, alliance and politics. Thus, we are Oyo-Ijesa. We combine the two. These also are facts of history which we are proud of.

But we are more than that. Igbajo, as the very name suggests, is made up of many peoples, not the Ijesa and Oyo alone. From the different *Oriki*, if you had time to hear them - you will know that we are from different places. This is even reflected in the composition of our council of chiefs: Our *Obaala* is from Ado. Our *Odofin* is

from Orangun Ile-Ila, to give but only two examples. This composition from different places you will also find in the different families in the town. Take our children who are with you at the University of Ife for example. Professor Makinde of your Faculty of Education has his ancestors from Ire, *Ire ni m'ogun*; and as for Dr. Oladitan of your Faculty of Arts, his fore-fathers came from Efon-Alaaye. And so on like that.

It is therefore important for us to recognise that Igbajo is truly a coming together, a summary of all Yoruba groups. And this is the greatest point of our address to you. Igbajo is the home of all Yoruba races or groups or whatever you people may call them in your books. Igbajo, more than any town or village or city, is one place that will all the time work for the coming together of all peoples. Long before the recent civil war in Nigeria, we in Igbajo had known what agony fratricidal war could mean. When the Ekiti confederacy was formed to enter into alliance with the Ijesa, the Igbomina and the Akoko all against Ibadan, we in Igbajo were the very first victims. But as we have said, since we had amongst us the Ijesa, the Ekiti, the Igbomina and many more, it was indeed a civil war, not an inter-tribal war. You academicians may want to formulate a word which will cover the situation - a war of allies fighting other allies of about the same composition. It does not pay. We know it. It is what has left us in this corner of the world.

We are therefore foremost in appreciating the significance of the Peace Treaty of 100 years ago. Our fervent prayer is that peace should continue to reign among us.

## **Appendix III**

### **Communique**

1. The National conference on the centenary of the Kiriji/Ekitiparapo Peace Treaty which was held at the University of Ife, Ile-Ife between 21–26 September 1986, recognises (a) that Peace and Unity in Nigeria is a pre-requisite for meaningful progress in the country; (b) that Peace and Unity in Nigeria can only be achieved by peace and unity within the component groups; (c) that the Yoruba constitute a substantial group within Nigeria and that their united contribution to the desired Peace, Unity and Progress is of prime importance.

2. The conference recognising further (a) that in historic times, the Yoruba are culturally homogenous sharing such common features as language, religious beliefs, social practices and a belief in common *Orirun*; (b) that as a result of historical developments in Yorubaland in the 19th century, the whole of Yorubaland had been so further intermingled and mixed that they are all related to one another almost by blood and that the purported differences between the sub-sections of Yorubaland are unreal. Therefore resolves:

- (i) That leaders at various levels should do everything to promote the natural unity.
- (ii) That scholars should promote comprehensive historical consciousness in their research and keep in mind the need to be above local or foreign prejudices and promote the incipient unity.
- (iii) That the study of Yoruba language and culture should be intensified and used in the service of promoting the unity.
- (iv) That our *Obas*, traditional leaders and modern elite should take it as their prime objective and responsibility to promote unity locally and
- (v) That historical sites all over Yorubaland should be designated and made accessible, through the provision of good roads, for the promotion of national consciousness.
- (vi) That women in their various walks of life should make conscious efforts to



promote the desired unity at all levels.

- (vii) That 23 September being the date when the 1886 Kiriji/Ekitiparapo Peace Treaty, bringing to an end a century of internecine wars in Yorubaland, was signed should be observed in all parts of Yorubaland annually as Peace and Unity day.
- (viii) That the site where the 1886 Peace Treaty was signed be marked with a monument befitting the importance of the occasion.
- (ix) To express profound gratitude to donors who made the conference successful, especially the University of Ife, International Breweries Ilesa, Heinemann Educational Books, West African Breweries Lagos, and prominent Obas, Chiefs and individuals all over Nigeria.

26 September 1986

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**Barcode  
Inside**



*War and Peace in Yorubaland* contains selections from the papers presented at the centenary conference on the 1886 Kiriji/Ekitiparapo Peace Treaty which was held at the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) Ile-Ife, from 21–28 September 1986.

The volume, while not discussing all the issues connected with War and Peace in Yorubaland, raises and gives a coherent picture of different issues fundamental to the modern history of the Yorubas and aspects of the human drama that constituted the Yoruba Civil Wars which went on from 1793 to 1893.

There is no doubt that this book is crucial to the understanding of Yoruba history in the last two hundred years. It is the first major effort since Samuel Johnson wrote in 1897 and an essential modern updating of his *History of the Yorubas*.

Chapters 1 - 13 deals with a general view of the wars, their causes and the general populace who participated in the wars. Section B, Chapters 14 to 22, deals more specifically with the war generals and the various military tactics they employed during the wars. Section C, Chapters 23 - 27, looks at external involvement and the search for peace, while Section D, Chapters 28 - 43, deals with the consequences of the events of the century. To young people who are thirsty for a knowledge of their history as well as older people who always wanted to read something comprehensive on the history of Yorubaland, this book recommends itself.

Professor Isaac Adeagbo Akinjogbin is Emeritus Professor of History of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. He was Director, Institute of African Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University from 1965-68 and Head of Department of History from 1966-81. Professor Akinjogbin is one of the leading authorities on Yoruba History and Culture. He has written and co-authored various books among which are *Dahomey and Its Neighbours 1708 - 1818* (1967); *Topics on Nigerian Economic and Social History* (1980) and *The Cradle of a Race* (1980). He also has a book on Yoruba poems titled *Ewi Iwoyi* (1967).



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